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GAMEFAN

NEXT GENERATION VIDEO GAME MAGAZINE

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 1
JANUARY 1997



INSIDE THIS ISSUE!
CODENAME TENKA
MECHWARRIOR 2
ROBOTRON X
VIRTUAL ON
VIRTUA COP 2
SONIC BLAST
MK TRILOGY
BUBSY 3D
SPIDER
LOMAX
SCUD
BUG TOO!
TUNNEL B1
DAYTONA CCE

PLUS:
RESIDENT EVIL 2
AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW!

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STREET FIGHTER EX

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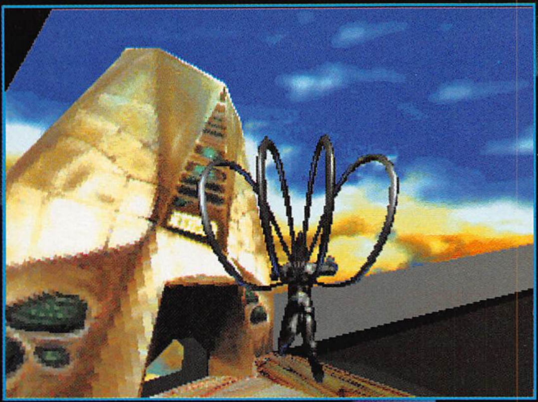
MDK
WORLD EXCLUSIVE
PLAYSTATION PREVIEW!

FINAL FANTASY VII - THE LATEST!
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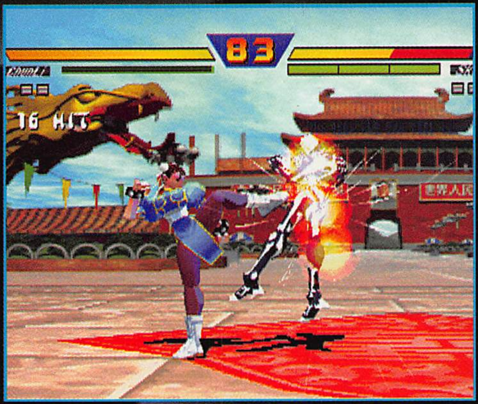
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PURE GENIUS...

REVEL IN THE SPLENDOR OF SHINY'S MOST INCREDIBLE GAME EVER, MDK. CHECK OUT OUR WORLD EXCLUSIVE PLAYSTATION PREVIEW AND SEE THE GAME THAT WILL SET NEW STANDARDS!

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WHERE THERE'S STREET FIGHTER...

THERE'S GAMEFAN! CHECK OUT THE EXCLUSIVE FIRST EVER BONA FIDE U.S. STREET FIGHTER EX COVERAGE ON PAGE 96

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COVER STORY

PLUNGE IN TO A WORLD LIKE NO OTHER...

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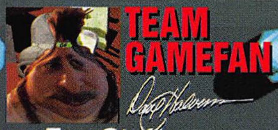
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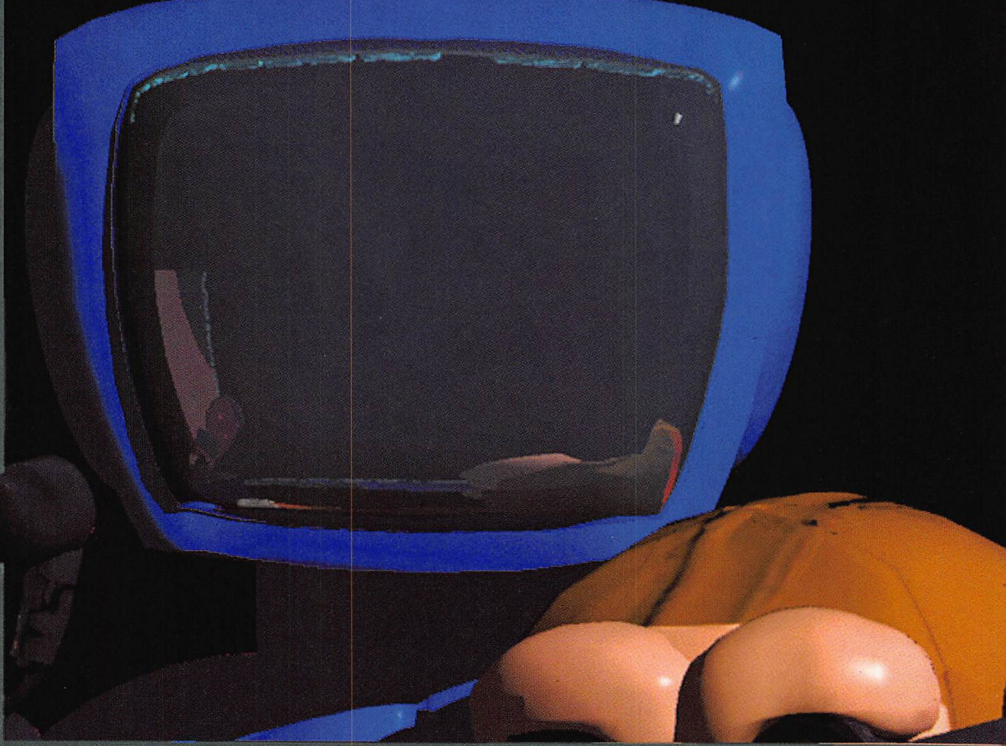
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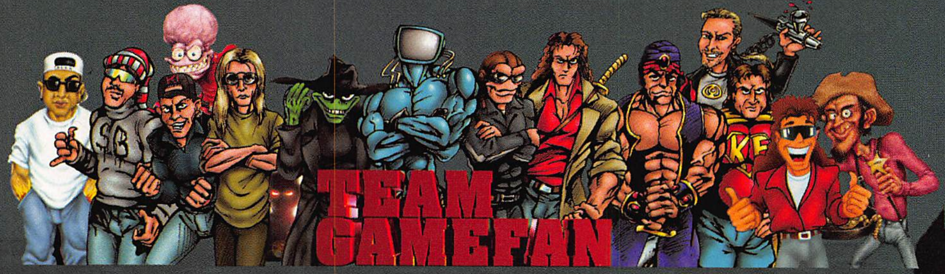
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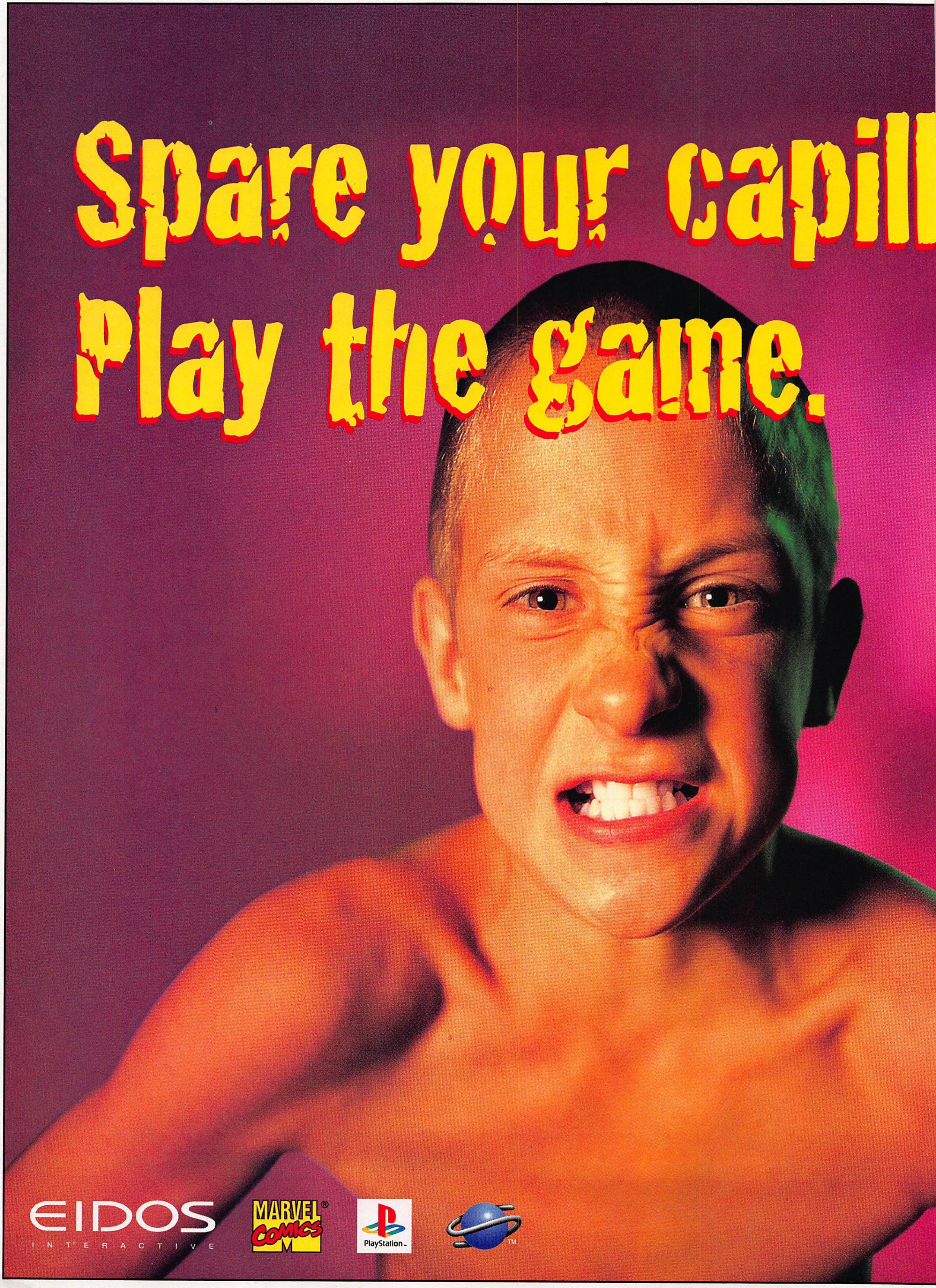


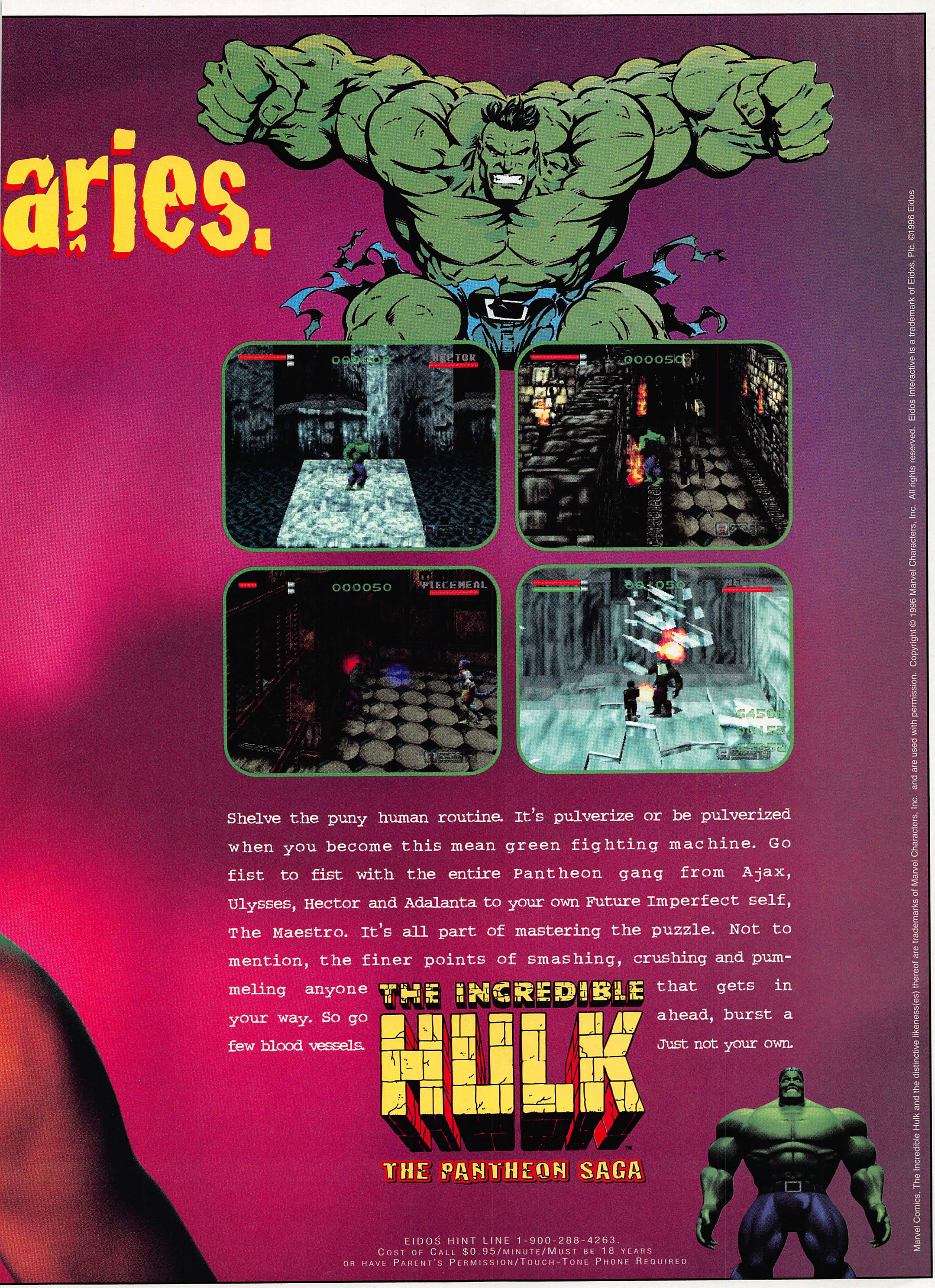
Welcome to the January issue of GameFan. As we toiled into the wee hours on this issue haggling over the Megawards like a pack of mad lobbyists, we came to a unanimous decision. Rather than running the awards in the January GF (which goes to press in early November) as we always have, we've decided to switch it to the February issue which goes on sale in mid-January. That way we can play all of this year's many November/December titles (completely buttoned up) in their entirety. Also, any games that don't make Christmas '96 won't slip in by mistake. Last year we all took for granted that Skeleton Warriors would make its announced Christmas release and it ended up delayed 'til March while the PS version was being completed for a simultaneous release.

In the next issue, you can count on the most extensive awards feature ever seen. We've added some new categories and will include the actual vote for each participant, rather than simply printing the overall winners. One thing's for sure: '96 was a year rich in software and new advancements in both design and technology. Aside from that, enjoy the issue and have a great holiday!




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TOP TEN MOST WANTED

READERS' TOP TEN

1. *Mario*[64] - Nintendo[64]
2. *Resident Evil* - PS
3. *Tekken 2* - PS
4. *Crash Bandicoot* - PS
5. *NiGHTS* - Saturn
6. *Mario RPG* - SNES
7. *Final Fantasy III* - SNES
8. *Pilotwings* - Nintendo[64]
9. *MK Trilogy* - PS
10. *Chrono Trigger* - SNES



READERS' MOST WANTED

1. *Final Fantasy VII* - PS
2. *KI Gold* - Nintendo[64]
3. *Virtua Fighter 3* - Arcade
4. *Tomb Raider*- Sat/PS
5. *Resident Evil 2* - PS
6. *Zelda*[64] - Nintendo[64]
7. *WaveRace*[64] - Nintendo[64]
8. *Shadows of the Empire* - Nintendo[64]
9. *MK Trilogy* - Nintendo[64]
10. *Street Fighter Alpha 2* - Sat/PS





1. *Tomb Raider* - PS
2. *Legacy of Kain* - PS
3. *MegaMan 8* - PS
4. *Crash Bandicoot* - PS
5. *Lomax* - PS
6. *Star Gladiators* - PS
7. *Sonic Blast 3D* - Saturn
8. *Arc the Lad 2* - PS
9. *Lunar: Silver Star Story* - Saturn
10. *Bubsy 3D* - PS



1. *Virtua Fighter 3* - Arcade
2. *Tekken 2* - PS
3. *Virtua Cop 2* - PS
4. *Samurai Shodown 4* - Neo•Geo
5. *Virtual On* - Saturn
6. *Prop Cycles* - Arcade
7. *Tenka* - PS
8. *Quake* - PC
9. *Wipeout XL* - PS
10. *Star Gladiator* - PS



1. *Virtual On* - Saturn
2. *Tomb Raider* - PS
3. *Virtua Cop 2* - Saturn
4. *Daytona CCE* - Saturn
5. *Powerslave* - PS
6. *NiGHTS* - Saturn
7. *SF Alpha 2* - Saturn
8. *Star Gladiators* - PS
9. *FF VII Demo* - PS
10. *Ghouls & Ghosts* - Genesis



1. *Lunar: Silver Star Story* - Saturn
2. *Arc the Lad II* - PS
3. *Tomb Raider* - PS
4. *Suikoden* - PS
5. *Virtua Cop 2* - Saturn
6. *Samurai Shodown 4* - Neo•Geo
7. *Fighting Vipers* - Saturn
8. *Virtual On* - Saturn
9. *Langrisser 3* - Saturn
10. *Lomax* - PS

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All you have to do to enter the drawing is write down a list of your top 10 favorite games and the 10 games you want the most that aren't out yet, on a piece of paper or a postcard then send them to: GAMEFAN TOP TEN, 5137 Clareton Dr., Suite 210 Agoura Hills, CA 91301

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Second Prize:
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Third Prize:
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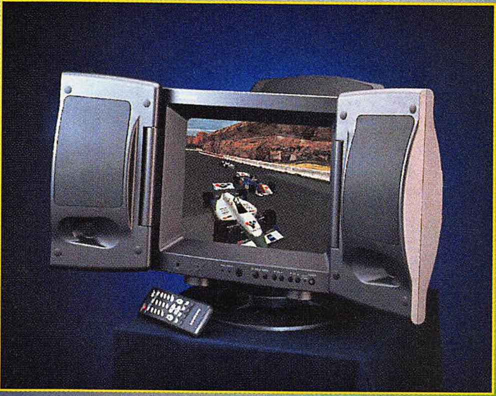
Congratulations

to last month's winners:

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Delorean Gipson, Bloomington, IL

Second Prize:
Troy Stiffler, Jersey Shore, PA

Third Prize:
William Rodriguez, North Miami, FL



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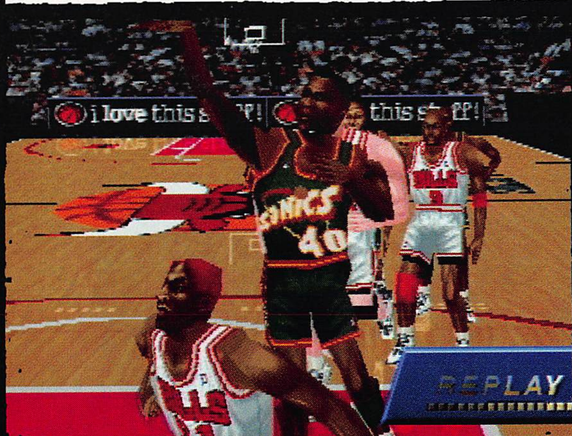
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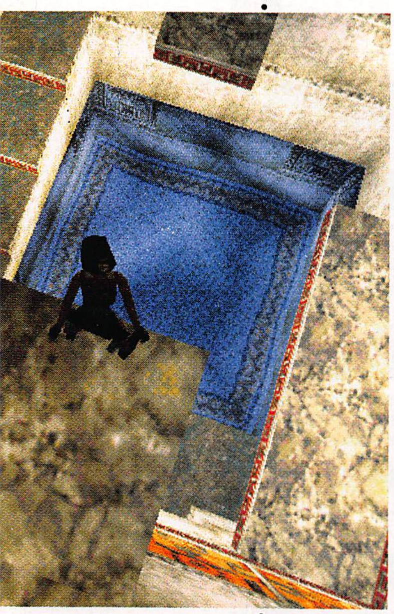


Go where no man has ever come out alive. Notice we said "man."



If the game graphics don't blow you away, one of these will.

Sometimes, having a



Treasure seeking, puzzle solving, alligator wrestling, and still time for a fight.



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heartthrob of Tomb Raider



PlayStation

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"9.5 - Playstation game of the year!"
" Adventure game of the year!"
Ultra Game Players

"99% - Game of the year!"
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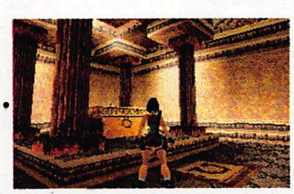
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Not everyone sees a bright light just before dying. (Lucky stiffs.)



Lara has her sights on a few ancient artifacts, and she's not going to let anything or anybody get in her way. Alligators. Wolves. Thugs. They're all tempting fate once in Lara's path. But hey, what's a little temptation? Especially when everything looks this good. In the game, we mean. Check out Tomb Raider at **www.tombraider.com.**

EIDOS INTERACTIVE



TOMB RAIDER™

VIEWPOINT

Legend
Graphics
Control
Play mechanics
Music
Originality



E. STORM NICK ROX KNIGHTMARE SHIDOSHI ORION GLITCH TAKUHI CHIEF HAMBLETON





SF ALPHA 2
SNES
CAPCOM-CART
FIGHTING

SFA2 on the SNES, while good (it's a wonder it's even here), doesn't live up to the shimmering *Super SF2* conversion of '94. But if my sole system was a SNES I'd be out the door clamoring for a copy. All of the characters are here, 'cept for the hidden ones, along with decent versions of their backgrounds. The animation is fair and the loading (about 3 seconds each round) is livable. It's *Alpha 2* on 16-bit, any way you slice it.

G 8 | C 8 | P 9 | M 5 | O 7 | **80**

While *SFA2* was actually licensed to Nintendo and not developed in-house, the game still shows a semblance of its arcade and 32-bit big brothers. That is, until you start to play it. First off, the game is very slow (and I mean crawling); nowhere near to speed of previous *Street Fighters*, and horror of horrors, it has the knack of loading at the most inopportune moments. Fun for the uninitiated, but old hands will have to re-time every single move. Fun, but not the killer app Nintendo promised.

G 8 | C 6 | P 7 | M 6 | O 7 | **80**

I know that this is 16-bit but I expected more from SNES *Alpha 2*. Broken animation, below average tunes and bad loading times... on a cartridge??! All of the previous SNES *Street Fighters* have been brilliant, so why should this be any different? I know there's a lot more detail to handle with *Alpha 2*, but this conversion smacks of *rush job*. Still the gameplay's all there, and I guess that's what counts.

G 6 | C 8 | P 8 | M 7 | O 6 | **68**



BUBSY 3D
PLAYSTATION
ACCOLADE-CD
ACTION/ADVENTURE

At first glance, *Bubsy 3D* may look simplistic, but further investigation uncovers a deep and very entertaining excursion into the depths of Rayon. As the whimsical soundtrack hums along you'll guide Bubsy (hopefully with the voice turned off) in and out of some truly unique game environments, all nicely texture mapped and gouraud shaded. The 3D engine takes some getting used to, but once you're in tune with it it'll all come together leaving you warm and fuzzy.

G 8 | C 7 | P 8 | M 8 | O 9 | **80**

Bubsy, after two painful sequels, finally makes a good showing thanks to Eidetic. The emphasis is on good though because *B3D* does have some wacky control. Strangely though, it sort of fits the game which overall is pretty wacked. Besides the weird camera angle when jumping, I found this to be a uniquely different and fun adventure, thanks to some creative level design and fresh ideas.

G 7 | C 7 | P 8 | M 8 | O 8 | **79**

Early on, while testing *Bubsy 3D*, I wanted to like it, but the flat shaded polys did nothing for me. Thankfully, Eidetic have woken up the graphics miraculously with some clean textures and spiffy lighting. *B3D* takes some getting used to, but once you get past the learning curve it's a really fun game. Big, too. Some of the later levels are crazy hard but overall a cool if not zany adventure.

G 8 | C 7 | P 8 | M 8 | O 9 | **80**



DESTRUCTION DERBY 2
PLAYSTATION
PSYGNOSIS-CD
RACING/COMBAT

I didn't really like *Destruction Derby* that much, so I was wary of this sequel. It looks a lot better than the original, but unfortunately, all of the factors that made the first game so irritating have returned with a vengeance. Psygnosis has included wider tracks in an attempt to balance the derby with the destruction, but to no avail. One big hit sends you spinning, and unless you're a *DD2* expert, you're out of the race. If you liked *DD* then this is your thing, otherwise I'd advise you to steer clear.

G 8 | C 7 | P 6 | M 7 | O 7 | **79**

Psygnosis always delivers a highly polished release, and *DD2* is no exception; there's wicked fun to be had zipping around those new and improved courses, crunching into every single opponent and watching the ensuing carnage. However, the gameplay remains identical to the original and gets very tiresome very quickly (indeed, the bowl option is devoid of any gameplay elements whatsoever). Excellent fun... for about twenty minutes.

G 9 | C 6 | P 5 | M 6 | O 6 | **78**

Looks like I'm the only dude who thought the original *DD* was good. I used to spend hours playing cat and mouse in those big levels. Now that the sequel is actually much bigger, with crazy stuff like roof-jumping and elevators, I'm lovin' it. Unfortunately, as with the original, the control is still pretty stiff, and they've done very little new with the play-mechanics. And yet there's the violence, the humor, the firepower...hey, bite me, this game is cool!

G 8 | C 7 | P 9 | M 8 | O 9 | **83**



HARDCORE 4X4
PLAYSTATION
ASC-CD
RACING

Hardcore 4X4 puts the suspension back in racing. The meaty vehicles react realistically to the terrain which is for the first time laid out properly in terms of actual off-road racing. Instead of the usual parallel jumps and bumps you get uneven, unpredictable courses which pitch you to and fro. Choose the wrong line and you roll, instead of bouncing off an invisible barrier. The lighting is excellent and the entire game well-rounded and balanced.

G 8 | C 8 | P 8 | M 7 | O 7 | **78**

In *Hardcore 4X4* you're not just competing against your opponents, you're competing against the track. On 'Pro' or 'Insane' difficulty it's a constant struggle to keep your truck upright, little own in the race. The graphics are impressive (the truck responds convincingly to the terrain), the controls are responsive and it's excellent fun – for a while. But the six tracks are all pretty similar, and (sin of sins) there's no two player mode. It's a novel approach to a racing game, but it just doesn't have the staying power to be a classic.

G 8 | C 8 | P 8 | M 7 | O 8 | **83**

At least something different was attempted here, with Gremlin producing a tight game engine and pleasing graphics. But wait, there's that niggling playability factor that's missing from so many games, and this is what *Hardcore 4X4* lacks as well. You bob up and down in a truck and win every race, and the lack of velocity (you'll be racing at speeds of up to 40kph!!) also detracts severely. The perfect game to rent.

G 8 | C 7 | P 6 | M 5 | O 8 | **77**



JET MOTO
PLAYSTATION
SONY-CD
RACING

Jet Moto's a strange one. It seems no matter how hard I try the computer is hell-bent on my annihilation. The game is so fast, fluid and fun however, that I can't stop playing. Learning curve aside, this is a hot racer. The water is nowhere near as real as that found in *WaveRace* but more and bigger tracks, three times the amount of competitors and truly burnin' tunes make Jet-Moto a worthy adversary.

G 8 | C 8 | P 7 | M 9 | O 9 | **88**

This is extreme jet-skiing with a whole bundle of added extras, including huge tracks, tons of competitors and loads of playing time bundled in for good measure. Massive undulating tracks, phenomenal jumps and a multitude of competitors compete in a game which even gives *WaveRace* a run for its money. There's even an ice and futuristic track to test your racing prowess. The only slight failing was the odd handling and lack of graphical detail, but otherwise... another original racing experience.

G 8 | C 7 | P 9 | M 8 | O 8 | **90**

I had more fun playing *WaveRace*, but I think *Jet Moto* is the better game. I love analog control and tricks, but *WaveRace* ends way to soon. Besides, *Jet Moto* has the coolest tracks ever; they twist, warp, and dive across obstacle-ridden swampland, broken overpasses, and great stretches of land. The graphics are amazing, the control (especially cornering) is good, and the *Pulp Fiction*-esque sound is great.

G 9 | C 8 | P 8 | M 8 | O 8 | **84**

PERIPHERAL VISION

In search of the ultimate joy-pad? Here's the latest from over seas brought home by NY-based Game Source. Both pads have a distinctive sci-fi look and perform very well and the Sakkara's list of features is very impressive. With a suggested retail price of just $19.99 (PS Sakkara DX) and $14.99 (SS Major) they're affordable as well. For more information on Game Source's controllers or plethora of other peripheral goodies you can reach them at: 212-279-6758. Hey, no web address; now where'd I put that phone?...

PS SAKKARA DX (PLAYSTATION)



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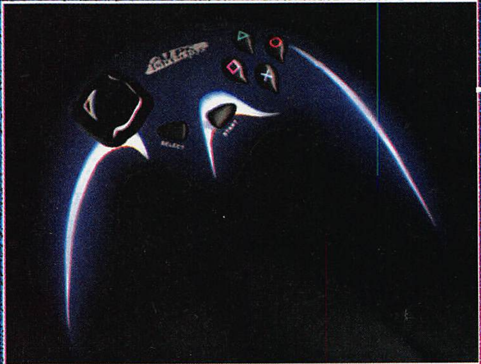
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LOMAX
PLAYSTATION
PSYGNOSIS-CD
ACTION/PLATFORM



I can't remember the last time I saw art this detailed or animation this spectacular... wait, it's all coming back to me now. *Flink* (an undermarketed little known Sega-CD game) was the last time. Those two guys from Scandinavia have done it again and created a hand-drawn 2D adventure you won't soon forget. From the music to the beyond-crazy challenge *Lomax*, with its mega play mechanics and many levels will keep you glued for days.

G 9 C 8 P 8 M 7 O 7 **85**



2D power on the PS! Give the makers of *Flink* a 32-bit system and they crank out, literally, a playable piece of artwork. *Lomax* has stunning design, gorgeous graphics, and very cool music – three elements essential to fine 2D platforming. The theme's not exactly my thing (I never liked *Lemmings*), but you can't help but love *Lomax*'s power-ups and the deep, 'walkin' into it' backgrounds. The experience is marred by slippy control, but it's tolerable.

G 8 C 8 P 8 M 7 O 5 **85**



Wow. I can appreciate good 2D when I see it, and this is really good 2D. The creators of *Flink* know how to make a platform game look impressive, and I guarantee you've never seen anything like this on the PlayStation. It even puts a lot of Saturn 2D to shame. As for the gameplay, well, it's fun but kind of slippy with imprecise collision detection. It's large, and you'll keep playing just to see what the next level looks like, but it may prove too frustrating for amateur platform fans.

G 9 C 7 P 7 M 9 O 7 **82**



ROBOTRON X
PLAYSTATION
WILLIAMS-CD
SHOOTING



Robotron X takes the panic-inducing, frenzied blasting gameplay of the original *Robotron* (one of my all time favorite games) and places it in a 3D arena. Cool idea, but... 1) the graphics can get pretty choppy, 2) none of the camera angles show the entire arena, and 3) aliens warp into random spaces, ruining your patterns anyway. It's a cool update that keeps the spirit of the original, but I can't help feeling that Player 1 could have done something more with it. Sorry, guys. Still, if pure unadulterated shooting is your thing, Robotron X should more then scratch the itch.

G 7 C 8 P 9 M 9 O 4 **82**



Two hundred levels of incessant shooting at small polygon, er, *things* got very tedious very quickly (especially as the ending is unspectacular). Unlike other classics like *Tempest*, *Robotron* hasn't worn well over time, and I certainly can't see myself playing this over and over again. If zipping around essentially the same arena two hundred times is your idea of fun, then buy this by all means. A limited replay value, so maybe renting is your answer, unless you're a *Robotron* freak...

G 7 C 7 P 7 M 8 O 9 **77**



Prep the OR, stat! We have heart failure! This is pure, unadulterated blasting, and nothing more. Even now I could play the original *Robotron*, but when I can reap the same pleasure in a cool polygonal environment with killer techno tunes, why would I? The new power-ups are puny, but they're here, so they're cool. And hey, with 200 levels to pound your thumbs and fry your eyes, you'll knock your hand-eye coordination senseless for hours.

G 8 C 9 P 8 M 9 O 7 **83**



TUNNEL B1
PLAYSTATION
ACCLAIM-CD
ADVENTURE



Tunnel B1, in all of its light sourced splendor is two things... hard, and HARD! If shooting and strategy are on your wish list then sign up here and make no plans for the weekend. *TB1* is a finely polished game and I liked it a lot, but I found the controls overly complex and the missions a tad to similar. It does harness long term play value though, and has a nifty soundtrack to boot. Plus, it's mighty purty.

G 9 C 6 P 7 M 8 O 8 **78**



TB1 features N64-caliber light sourcing and texture mapping like you wouldn't believe, all at a super smooth frame rate. If looks could kill, *TB1* would be O.J. Simpson. Unfortunately, the game doesn't play anyway near as good as it looks. The tracks aren't wide enough, the camera is too low, your craft handles awkwardly and the action is way too repetitive. It's not bad, it's just a case of: great game engine, shame about the game.

G 10 C 7 P 6 M 9 O 8 **80**



Tunnel B1 has graphics which are so well light-sourced that you'll initially wonder if you're playing an FMV experience! After this shock though, you'll settle down to a corridor shooting match which becomes repetitive extremely quickly. You certainly won't be gasping at that light-sourced stealth-helicopter the tenth time it guns you down because the tunnels are too narrow, and this 'lie on your back' view of the action is also possibly the most annoying I've ever seen...

G 9 C 7 P 6 M 7 O 8 **78**



BUG TOO!
SATURN
SEGA-CD
ACTION/PLATFORM



Take away El Lamo disco bug and you've got yourself one heck of a platformer. Rather than push out a quicky sequel to cash in on *Bug!*'s popularity, Realtime took their time and produced a game over twice as big and at the same time fixed all the little bugs present in the first groundbreaking installment. The music's waaay improved as are the play mechanics. *Bug!*'s new dog is cool too, the little maggot. *Bug Too!*'s a tough one, but if you've got the time *Bug!*'s got the juice.

G 9 C 9 P 8 M 8 O 8 **90**



I would say that *Bug Too!* is a game you'll either love or hate, except that I'm somewhere in between. The pseudo-3D 'square' gameplay is pretty much the same as before, though this time there's a lot more innovation in the level design. It's not the most exciting game ever, but it is kinda funky in its own special way and at least it's a true 3D platform game. There are plenty of levels, and a really cool soundtrack, but I still think *Bug!* has a long way to go to become a classic. Fans of the original will be in insect heaven though.

G 8 C 7 P 7 M 9 O 7 **82**



Bug Too! is a 40+ level platformer dream with depth, humor, and ample challenge. The 3D playfields are incredibly expansive-much, much larger than the original's – and the level designs are excellent. I love the new cast of characters, stunning soundtrack, and cool voices. To top it off, the polygonal, rendered graphics are smooth and colorful, and the control is solid. Saturn owners, here's money well spent.

G 9 C 8 P 8 M 9 O 8 **85**



DAYTONA CCE
SATURN
SEGA-CD
RACING



Do we really need another *Daytona*... with clipping? Of course we do! *Daytona CCE*, pop up aside, is a vast improvement over the original in terms of everything except for music. Of course, it's also a year later and I have *F1*. Where's my B-Univ Sega? They go on vacation or what? This is a faster, smoother, longer, version of *Daytona*. Fans can pop a cork and join Knightmare in his celebration!

G 8 C 8 P 8 M 7 O 6 **80**



I think I'm going to stand alone on this one. Yes, the clipping is horrendous, yes the opening American soft rock is ear damaging, but other than that *Daytona CCE* is awesome. It's fast, smooth, challenging, realistic, responsive and above excellent fun. Other than the pop up, the graphics are first rate (full screen and 30 fps) and the in-game music remixes are all excellent. There's two new tracks, nine cars, plenty of secrets, a cool Ghost mode and best of all : analog control! You just have to look past the pop up.

G 8 C 9 P 9 M 8 O 8 **94**



I was so looking forward to this, and unfortunately I was bitterly disappointed by the frankly horrendous graphics. Everything else in here is perfection: great gameplay, increased speed, more of everything to choose from, but again, those graphical glitches and unbelievably poor pop-up (sometimes even worse than the original!) shattered my racing illusions. I'm happy with the play mechanics, but those pixelly polygons warping and popping up before me makes me really wonder about any future 3D racers on this system...

G 3 C 9 P 10 M 8 O 5 **82**



MR. BONES
SATURN
SEGA-CD
ALTERNATIVE



Multi-genre games usually (well always) just aren't for me, which is why I'm overwhelmed that I like *Mr. Bones*. Maybe it's because it's sooo multi-genre and not just a poser. This truly is unlike anything I've ever seen before and in a quirky kind of way I can't quite put my finger on. Once you begin, it's hard to put down. I'll tell you one thing, a lot of time and effort stand behind *Mr. Bones*, and it shows.

G 9 C 8 P 8 M 8 O 10 **81**



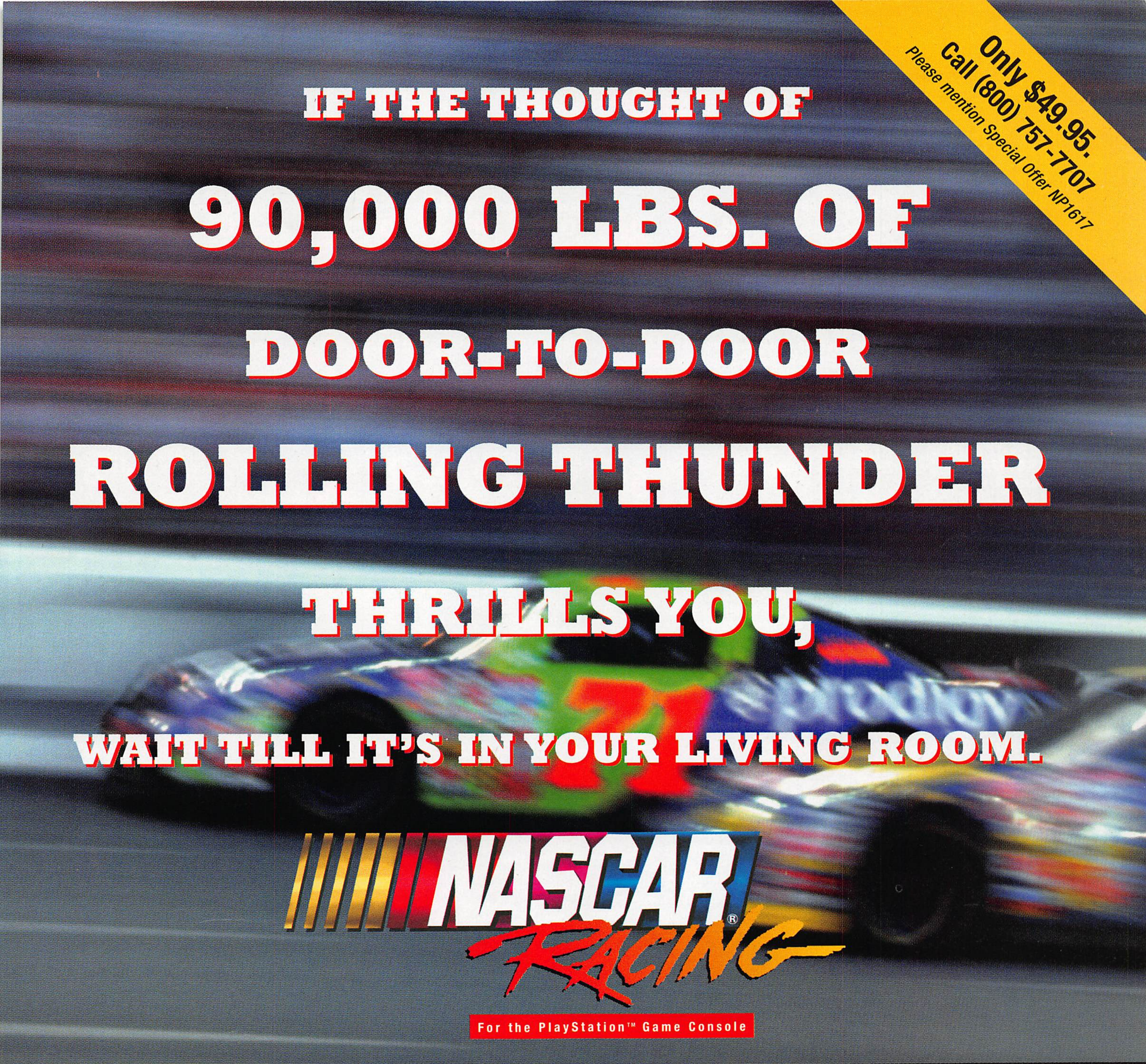
Now this one caught me by surprise. I don't know what I was expecting from *Mr. Bones*, but it certainly wasn't this. *Mr. Bones* may not be the coolest (or most responsive) character ever, but he's one of the most original. A lot of thought has gone into the various sub games, and no two levels are alike. Plus the soundtrack really rocks (well, blues). There's also a surreal atmosphere of funk which permeates the game and kind of grows on you. Not everyone is going to dig *Mr. Bones*, but if you're in the mood for something a little different, check it out.

G 9 C 8 P 8 M 9 O 10 **84**

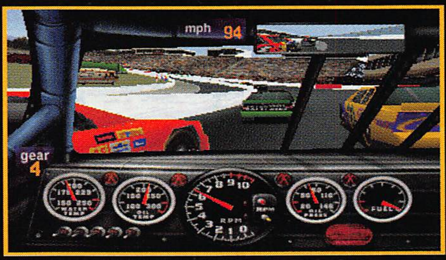


Mr. Bones gets my vote for most original title of the year. Bones himself is kinda wimpy, but one can't help but be amazed by the range of motion in his incredible animation. The FMV is hot, the cleanest ever on Saturn, and packs a heck of a good story. The multi-genre gameplay maintained my interest, despite questionable control at times. My only question: Will you play it again once it's done? Maybe, if only to show your buddies a truly trippy game.

G 9 C 7 P 8 M 9 O 10 **82**



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SONIC 3D BLAST
SATURN
SEGA-CD
ISOMETRIC/ACTION



To be honest, I wasn't expecting much of a blast out of this one, but I've come away with a smile on my face thanks to the folks at Travellers Tales. While *S3DB*'s isometric gameplay is really nothing new, when married to the Sonic formula it works extremely well. The music at times will bring a tear to a *Sonic* lover's eye and the 3D Chaos Emerald stages are a joy indeed. Bring me Sonic 'til I'm blue, I absolutely love 'em!

G 9 C 8 P 6 M 8 O 8 — **80**



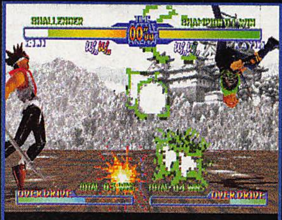
The coolest mascot makes his return, and a platformer lover like myself couldn't be happier. While it's not the heaven-sent 2D side-scroller I was moanin' for, as I play *Blast* I've come to realize that it truly is a *Sonic* game (ie., it plays like a dream, it's got the coolest music, and the control and play mechanics are perfect). Best of all, *Sonic Blast* is long, the bonus zones are too cool, and the game has Naka's expert tweaking written all over it. One of my favorite *Sonic* games ever!

G 9 C 10 P 10 M 10 O 9 — **94**



Sonic Blast was a cool Genesis game, and it makes an even cooler Saturn game it's just... well, I was hoping that Sonic's 32-bit debut would be more than just a Genesis port-over. Sure they've added a bunch of stuff (rendered intro, polygon bonus rounds, animated environments, weather effects) but the game play and level layouts are still the same. It controls a lot better with the analog pad, and it still 'feels' like a *Sonic* game (just), but I'm still waiting for the first true 32-bit *Sonic*.

G 8 C 8 P 8 M 8 O 8 — **83**



TOSHINDEN URA
SATURN
SEGA-CD
FIGHTING



URA what? A bad fighting game, that's what. These brainy folks, after witnessing the tragedy of a PS port, decided smartly to simply take away the transparencies and 3D backgrounds the SS had trouble with. So, a series that relies on its graphic prowess gets a downgraded sequel with one new character and one better left in the sketch pad. I like *Toshinden*, and am quite excited about *Toshinden 3* due out shortly in Japan, but this one begs to be forgotten.

G 5 C 7 P 7 M 7 O 5 — **50**



I've never been a big *Toshinden* fan. The original PlayStation version dropped a few jaws with its amazing visuals, but lost in all other counts to *Tekken*. Unfortunately, the latest in the series retains all the flaws of its predecessors: It's slow, unresponsive, easy (I completed the game first go using one button) and the character design really sucks. Except Vermilion, he's cool. It may have been the first true '3D' fighter, but I can't see anyone choosing this over *Fighting Vipers* this Christmas.

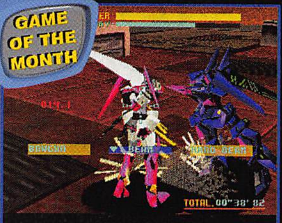
G 6 C 5 P 4 M 7 O 7 — **56**



I'm flabbergasted by the audacity of Takara to produce another version of their already heavily flawed *Toshinden* without any sort of gameplay enhancements whatsoever. Indeed, in many ways, this is worse than *Remix*; there's now 2D backdrops instead of 3D ones, horribly blocky floors, two breathtakingly dull characters and the same overbalanced gameplay. This has 'rush-job' sprayed all over it in 15-foot-high, day-glo yellow paint. Avoid it like the plague.

G 4 C 5 P 5 M 6 O 2 — **45**

GAME OF THE MONTH



VIRTUAL ON
SATURN
SEGA-CD
FIGHTING



I never cared too much for *Virtual On* in the arcades... It was just too expensive, and the control scheme too complex. But now that I have it at home, I've grown to respect its heavy emphasis on strategy and this unprecedented level of originality for a fighter. The translation is hot, the game plays surprisingly well with just a normal control pad, and the vertical split screen works great. Sega has Model 2 translations wired... *Last Bronx* is next!

G 10 C 9 P 9 M 8 O 9 — **93**



I'm stunned at the quality of this conversion. Not since *VF2* have we seen such an accurate Model 2-to-Saturn translation. It plays perfectly and the detail on the mechs is absolutely incredible. But what surprised me most is how much depth there is to the gameplay. There's a vast array of techniques to master, and each character and arena requires a different strategy. *Virtual On* provides a refreshing new angle on a well-worn genre, and deserves a place in every Saturn owner's collection.

G 9 C 9 P 9 M 8 O 9 — **97**



Stomping mech battles with constant adrenaline rushes; that's what *Virtual On* is all about! Near-perfect gameplay from the arcade has been faithfully translated onto the Saturn, and the awesome explosions, cunning tactics and extra options only add to the playing experience. Instantly addictive, a great two-player mode and a learning arch you'll previously thought impossible in these type of games. One game you simply must own, only blighted by the fact that Sega hasn't released the double arcade joystick (which makes the game even more of a joy)...

G 9 C 9 P 10 M 7 O 9 — **96**



VIRTUA COP 2
SATURN
SEGA•CD
SHOOTING



Sheer brilliance! By far the best 3D seen on the Saturn, all the arcade gameplay faithfully transferred onto the small screen, and that really cool gun to play with! The added bonus of the Big Head and Mirror modes along with Saturn-only sections make this even better than the original. A truly first-rate piece of software, and the best gun game available (although that isn't saying much). Buy it now, and love it for weeks!

G 9 C 9 P 9 M 7 O 8 — **95**



I know I say this every time Sega does an arcade translation, but I am stunned (no pun intended, I swear) by how amazing this game looks. Even more so than *VFII*, *Fighting Vipers*, and *Virtual On*, this game is so close to the arcade it's scary. Even better, it has an entirely new level exclusive to the Saturn version, and tons of cool little options... If you don't like gun games, then hey, never mind. But if you do, even a little, then *Virtua Cop 2* is your nirvana.

G 10 C 8 P 8 M 6 O 6 — **95**



Not only is *Virtua Cop 2* an excellent arcade-to-home conversion, but an outstanding game in its own right. It's bigger, badder and more spectacular than its predecessor with longer levels and twice the polygon count. There's plenty of Saturn exclusive features to keep coin-op fans happy, while the ranking mode makes for an immense challenge. And hey, call me irresponsible, but I get *such* a kick out of gunning down hundreds of gun-totting perps.

G 8 C 9 P 9 M 9 O 7 — **94**



BATMAN FOREVER
SATURN
ACCLAIM-CD
FIGHTING



My longing for a *Streets of Rage*-type side scroller lingers on... Now, had I hoped for a no-holds-barred, arcade button-smashin' actioner, I'd be in heaven. Sadly though, I'm not. While *BFA* does have graphic power to burn and a Bat-tastic soundtrack, it's just a bit too frantic for my taste. Although a combo system does exist you're hard pressed to find a second to pull any, (other than Robin's "Frenzy") off. A finely produced game for the arcade maniac.

G 8 C 6 P 5 M 8 O 7 — **68**



Unlike some of my fellow editors, I actually enjoy side scrolling beat-'em-ups (*Final Fight* rules), but *BF* is a weak example of the genre. It may look and sound flashy (a lot better than the PS version), but the controls suck. Batman and Robin move like they're skating on ice, and all too often you find yourself getting hit from behind because your character is frozen in the other direction after punching. *Very* irritating. With better controls this could have be fun, but as it is, I'll stick with *Guardian Heroes*.

G 7 C 4 P 5 M 7 O 7 — **60**



Alas, my quest for a hot side-scrolling beat-'em-up shall continue. *Batman* ain't all bad, it's just that any redeeming features are mired in a pool of messy gameplay. In *Final Fight*, for example, you could stay with an enemy and work 'em for a while. In *BF*, the enemies are mindless drones, your moves and "combos" are useless, and any satisfaction you might glean from a skillful attack is thwarted by chaos and busted collision. Very cool renders to look at, but a bad game within.

G 8 C 7 P 3 M 5 O 6 — **51**



SAMURAI SHODOWN 4
NEO•GEO
SNK-CART/CD
FIGHTING



At first glance, *Samurai IV* seems to be a cheap *Samurai III* rehash, but on closer inspection, you'll find it to be a very worthy sequel that repairs *SSIII*'s faults while boldly introducing a number of cool new systems. The two new characters are hardly worth getting excited about, but it's great to have Charlotte back... What's up with no Cham Cham, though? Regardless, this is probably the *last Samurai* we'll see on the ol' Neo hardware, so I'm glad it's a good one.

G 8 C 9 P 9 M 9 O 6 — **94**



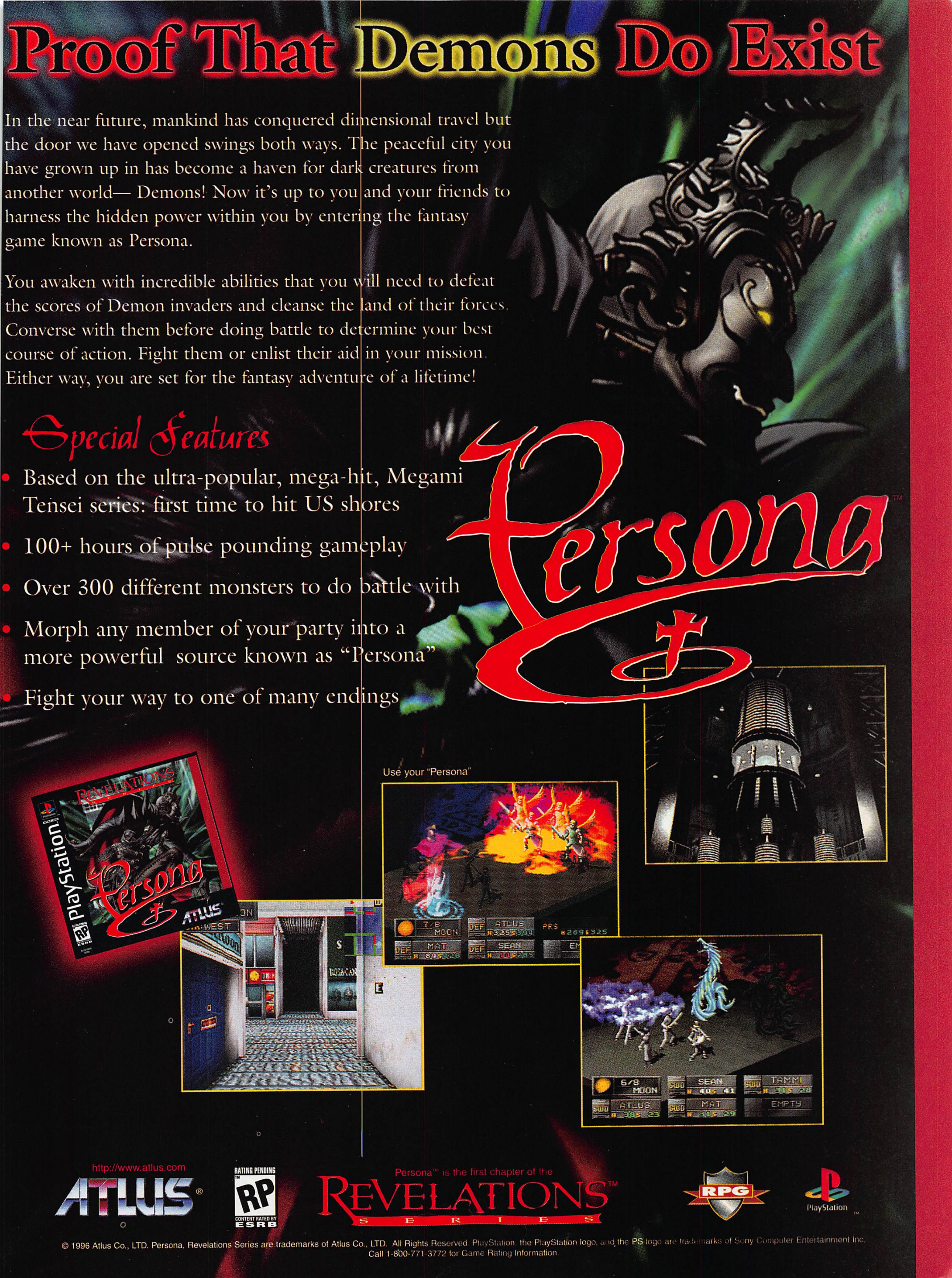
Another *Shodown* series in SNK's continued license to print money, and this one is pretty spectacular, as the developers have tried many additions to make this game play as well as their best (*KOF '96*). Loads of characters, good and evil forms, suicides, fatalities (not too happy about that one, though), basic combos and cool two-in-ones make this the most balanced *Shodown* yet. A must for fans, and all those who like laughing at the most appallingly translated win quotes ever seen...

G 9 C 9 P 9 M 10 O 6 — **93**



From the moment I first started playing, everything just felt so right. Beautiful graphics, amazing music, flawless control, character animation of unparalleled quality, AND I get my Charlotte back. Rarely do I love a game this much, but it's just so good. Sadly, it does fall short in two minor areas (the backgrounds aren't as good as *Shodown 3*'s and the returning characters are missing their music), but that doesn't stop it from being one of the best 2D fighting games ever released, and cause for Shodown fans everywhere to rejoice. Thank you, SNK.

G 9 C 10 P 9 M 10 O 7 — **98**



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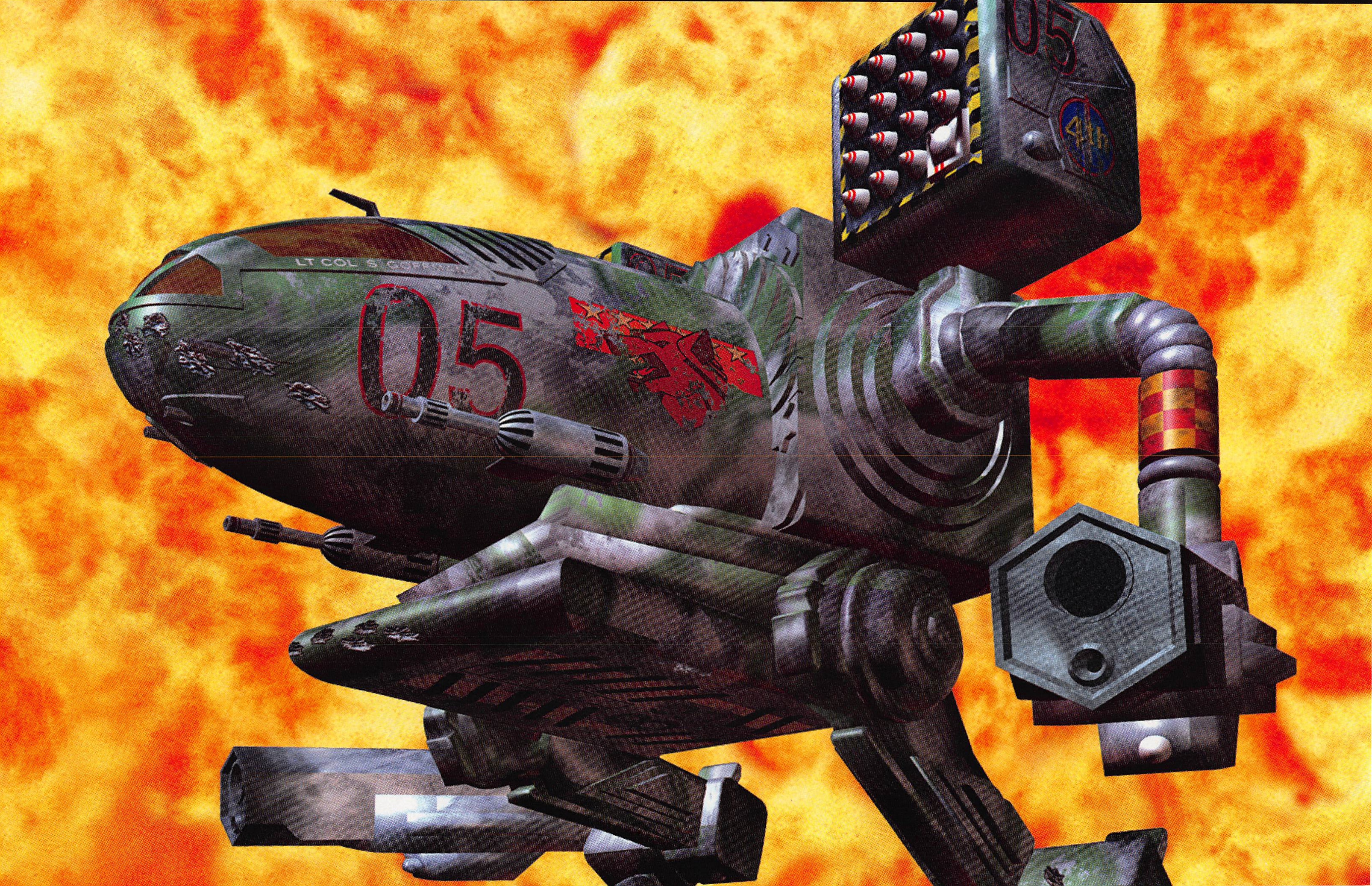
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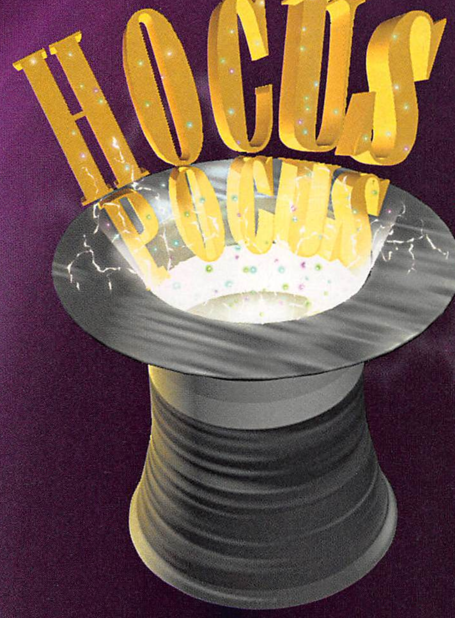

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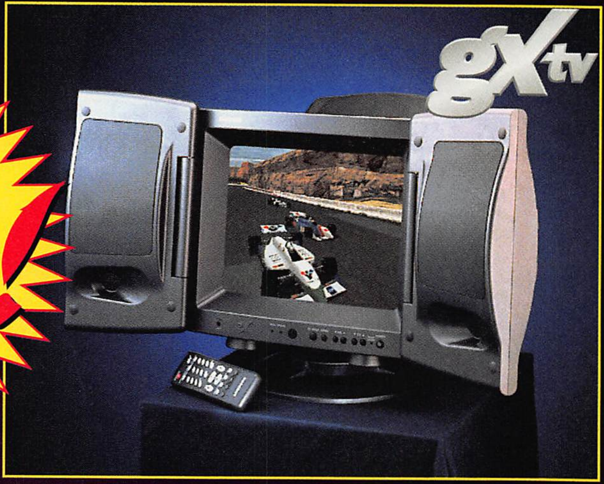

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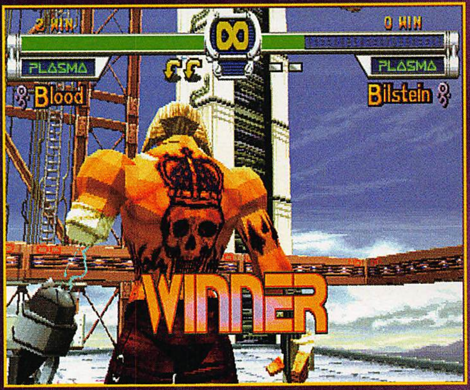
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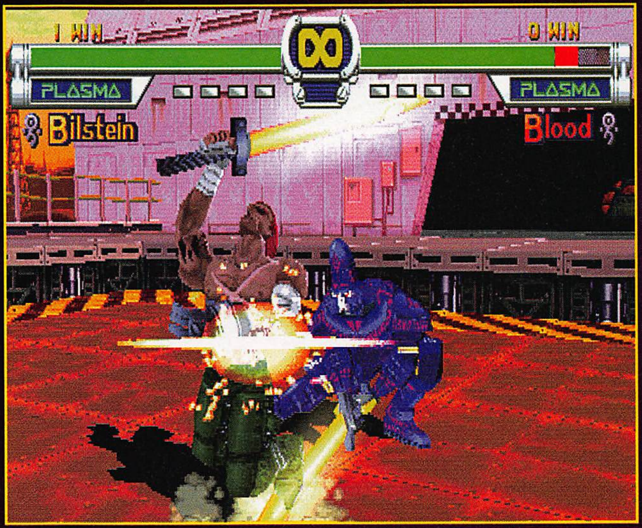
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PLAYABLE BOSSES:

BILSTEIN - In Arcade mode, hold down SELECT and move the character cursor LEFT to RIGHT from Hayato to Gore. While still holding SELECT, input X, CIRCLE, X, CIRCLE, SQUARE, SQUARE, SQUARE, TRIANGLE, TRIANGLE, TRIANGLE, then X and CIRCLE together. If done correctly, you'll hear a spot effect and an arrow to the RIGHT will appear. Move the cursor there and the big boss is all yours!





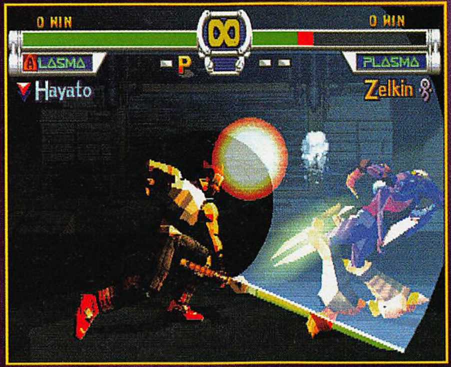
KAPPAH - After inputting the Bilstein code, return to arcade mode and from Bilstein, hold down SELECT and cycle through ALL the characters until you reach Hayato. While still holding SELECT, input CIRCLE, SQUARE, TRIANGLE, SQUARE, X, SQUARE, TRIANGLE. SQUARE, CIRCLE, SQUARE, then TRIANGLE and X together. If done correctly, you'll hear another spot effect and an arrow to the LEFT will appear and the strange frog/cucumber creature will be available! How strange.

BLOOD - After inputting the Kappah code, hold down SELECT and on Bilstein, input X, SQUARE, X, SQUARE, X, SQUARE, then move ONE space over to Kappah (whilst still holding SELECT) and input CIRCLE, TRIANGLE, CIRCLE, TRIANGLE, CIRCLE, TRIANGLE, then press L1 and R1 at the same time. You'll hear yet another spot effect and Blood, the hardest of hardcore Gladiators is yours!

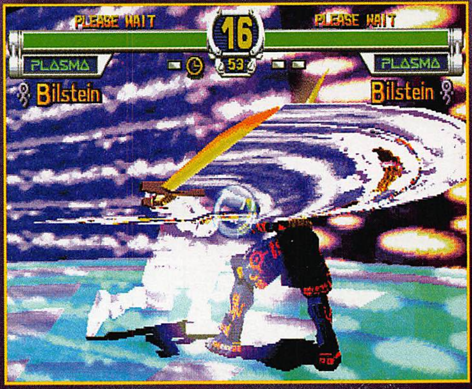




WALL MODE - Beat the game on any difficulty level and return to the options screen, selecting 'Wall On'. Now there's an invisible wall resulting in rebounds and more room for juggling combos!



DARK MODE - On the versus screen (as the fight is loading), hold L2, R2 and DOWN at the same time. Continue holding until the fight starts and you'll see mono-filament weapons a-glowing in the dark! Too cool!



SUPER BILSTEIN - Set your game to two rounds and defeat every enemy (including Bilstein) in under six minutes. A new challenger then appears, a ghostly cyber Bilstein beckoning you to his black hole!

LOOK FOR THE COMPLETE STAR GLADIATOR GUIDE IN MEGAFAN ISSUE #2!! THERE'S MOVES AND STRATEGIES FOR EVERY CHARACTER, INCLUDING BILSTEIN, KAPPAH AND BLOOD!!



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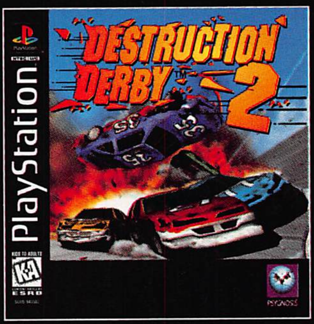
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DESTRUCTION DERBY 2
PlayStation

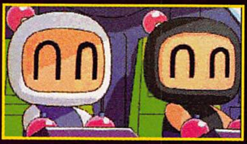
SUPER BOMBERMAN — SEGA SATURN (IMPORT) — POWER-UP, HIDDEN CHARACTERS



Hudson, the home of quality software (as long as it features SD folk with huge bombs) have hidden a couple of codes in the game to get the most out of your bombing. To obtain full power on level 1-1 of the game, press and hold L+R during the opening screens (where the two bombermen are dancing) and then press UP/LEFT and A. For full power on level 2-1, hold L+R in the usual place and then press UP/LEFT and B. For full power on level 3-1, hold L+R and press UP/RIGHT and C . For 4-1, hold L+R and press UP/RIGHT and X. For 5-1, hold L+R and press UP and Y. For the ending, hold L+R and press DOWN and Z. For BATTLE MODE with two new characters, simply execute all the above codes except the ending. Happy explosions!

NORMAN KWONG
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

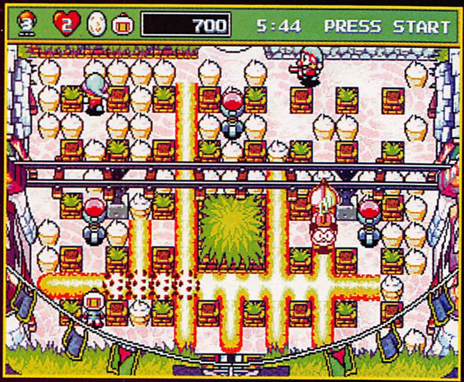












WIPEOUT XL — SONY PLAYSTATION — PIRANHA TEAM'S CHINESE PROTOTYPE VEHICLE, EXTRA PHANTOM COURSES



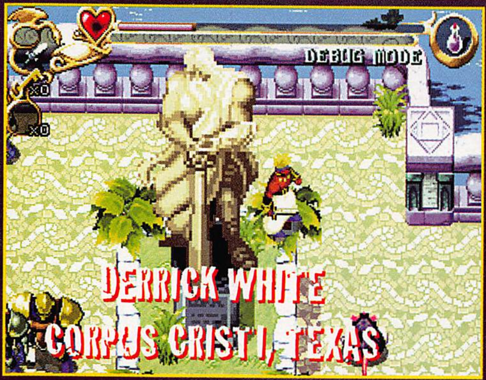


Now you don't have to spent that extra time training for the ultimate in cyber sledding, courtesy of the Chinese team and their speed craft. Clocking in speeds of over 340kph, this code (above) also lets you race the two hardest courses. Are you up to it?

JAMES J. SOH
FLUSHING, NEW YORK



LEGEND OF OASIS — SEGA SATURN — GAME SHARK DEBUG CODE!!



DERRICK WHITE
CORPUS CRISTI, TEXAS

Master Code: F6000914 C305
B6002800 0000

Yet more codes for Legend of Oasis? Yep, but this one is really cool. You'll need a Game Shark for it though. Firstly enter the Master Code then enter the DEBUG CODE: 16088724 123B

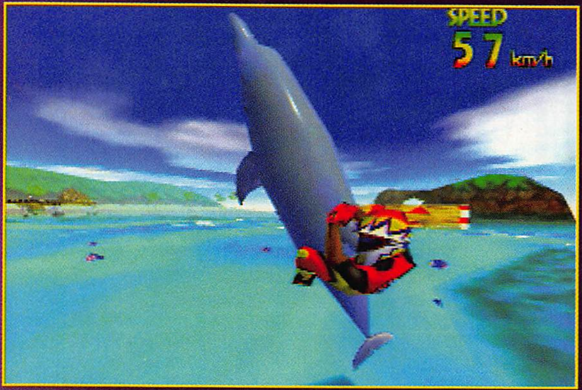
Then press:

LShift + A - For spirits you have and want
LShift + B - List all game text
LShift + C - Super Jump
LShift + X - Teleport
LShift + Y - Slow motion
LShift + Z - Add any item to inventory
LShift + Start - See surrounding land




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Designed for Microsoft Windows 95
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PlayStation
KIDS TO ADULTS
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

WAVERACE 64 — NINTENDO 64 — DOLPHIN MACHINE?!



RIDEABLE DOLPHIN - Go to Dolphin Park in Stunt Mode, and practice your stunts, as this is the key to obtaining the 'happy porpoise' craft. Start your cruise around the bay, and then execute every single stunt that your character is able, as well as passing through every single ring. Once all your stunts have been successfully completed, you'll hear a dolphin squeak as you cross the finish post. Exit, and go to the Machine Select screen to select the dolphin (see other cheat), and you're off on the back of your new aquatic pal. Joy! Perform several stunts with the dolphin in Stunt mode (in the same way as before), and the game will save the dolphin as a selectable vehicle and you'll see dolphins instead of jet-skis in the intro.

MACHINE SELECT SCREEN - After obtaining the dolphin, go to the machine select screen and highlight your craft. Now instead of selecting your craft, press and hold down on the 3D stick, then choose your vehicle and options. Keep holding down, and before you know it, you'll be racing on a dolphin!







LEGACY OF KAIN — SONY PLAYSTATION — REFILL BLOOD, FULL MAGIC, ALL FMV!!



ALL CODES - During the game, input the following codes for a multitude of goodies, and note that you don't need to pause the game; just press the buttons whenever you want!

BLOOD REFILL: UP, RIGHT, SQUARE, CIRCLE, UP, DOWN, RIGHT, LEFT

FULL MAGIC: RIGHT, RIGHT, SQUARE, CIRCLE, UP, DOWN, RIGHT, LEFT

ALL FMV: LEFT, RIGHT, SQUARE, CIRCLE, UP, DOWN, RIGHT, LEFT

Want to view all of that lovely FMV once you've inputted that particular code? Then simply press SELECT and go to your DARK DIARY! Happy bloodletting, vampiric deviant!



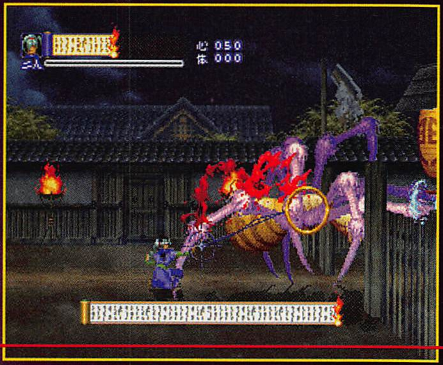
JEFF GUERRERO, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

GAME SHARK — SEGA SATURN — GAME SHARK CONVERTER?

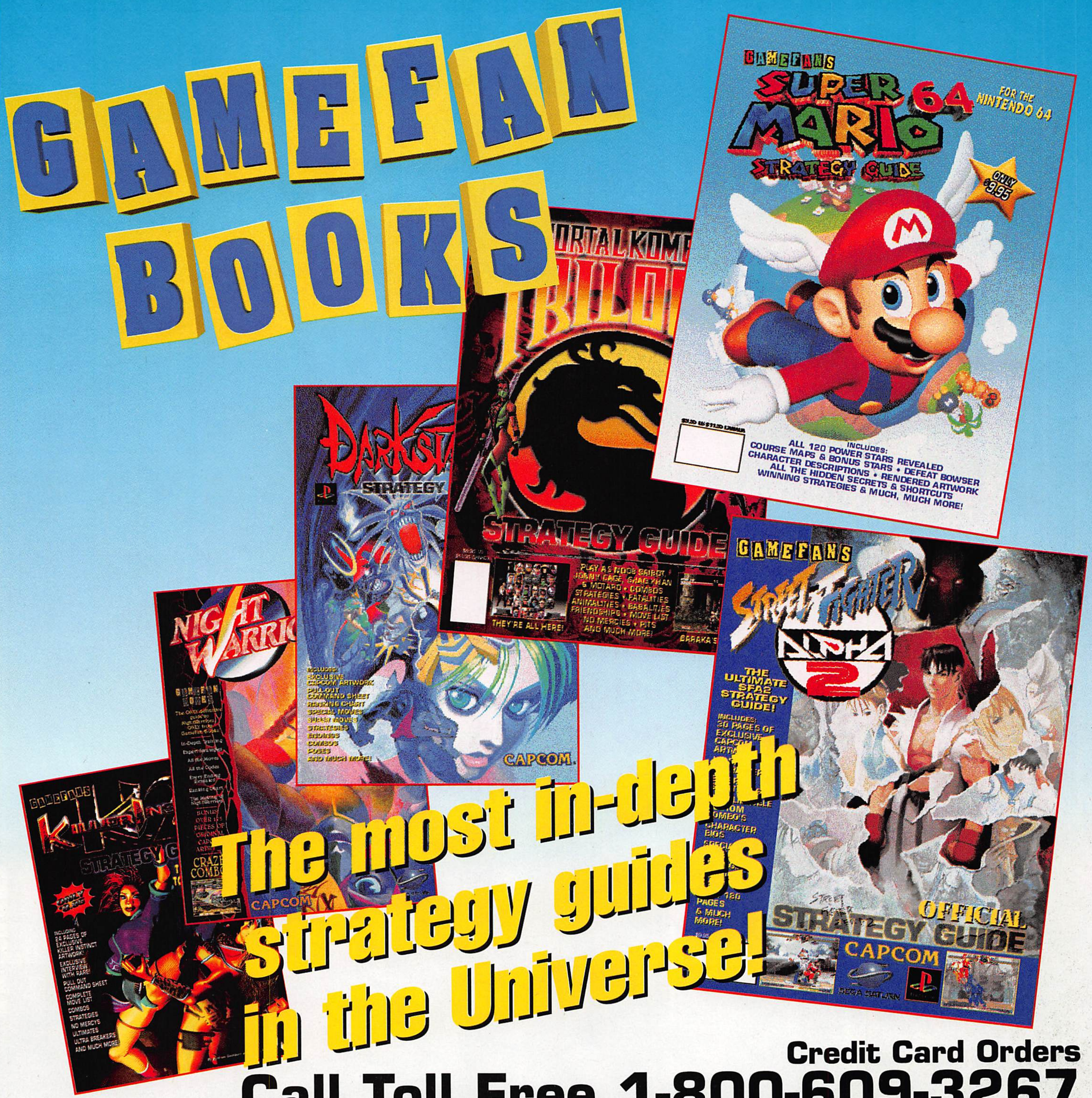
PLAY JAPANESE DISCS? - Want to play all the latest Japanese games months before they come out over here; like the awesome Psychic Killer (right)? Well now all you need to buy is an American Saturn and a Game Shark! Here's what you have to do...

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2. Place a Japanese game into your Saturn.
3. Turn the Saturn on and choose 'Start Game'
4. Highlight 'Start game without enhancements'
5. Hold down X, Y and Z and then press Start... and the game loads like normal!!

MIKE HERRINGTON, WOODSTACK, GEORGIA



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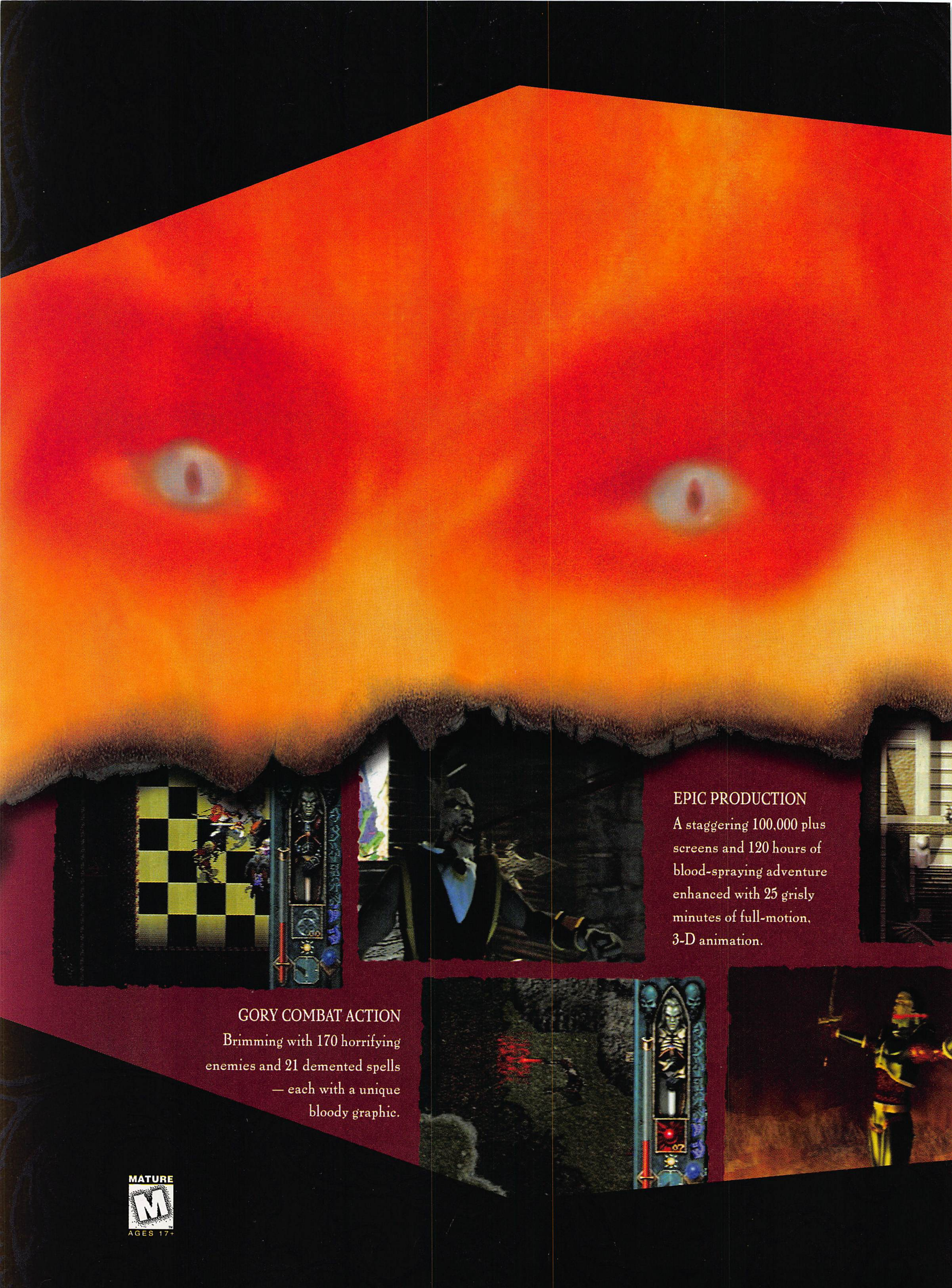
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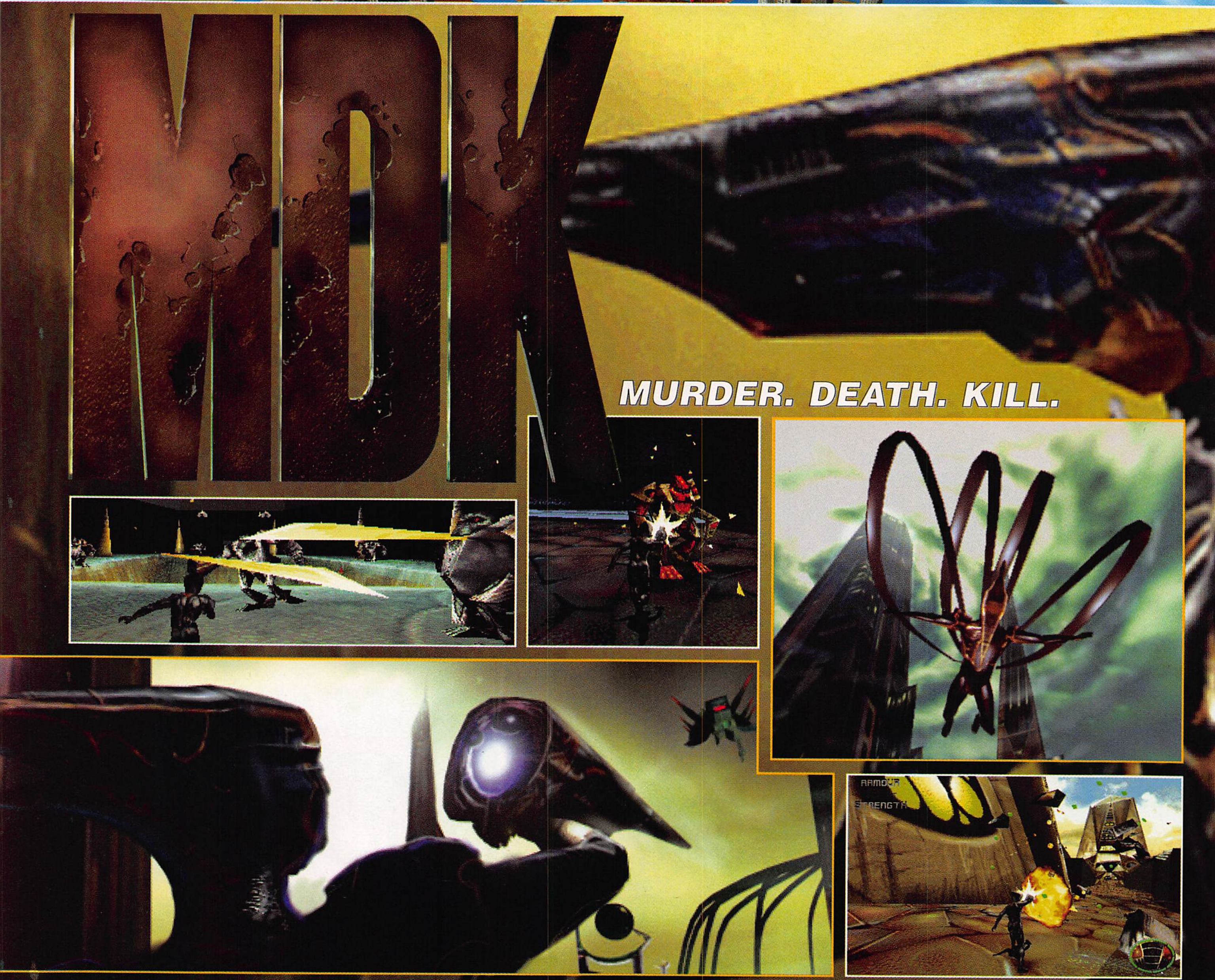
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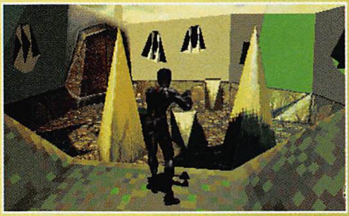
MDK

MURDER. DEATH. KILL.



What's the coolest gun you've ever seen in a video game? The BFG in *Doom*? The M-60 in *Powerslave*? *Earthworm Jim*'s pistol perhaps? Throughout the course of video gaming history guns in games have gotten bigger, badder, and better to the point where nothing much impresses us anymore. Well, OK, maybe *Turok*. But not much else. So when Shiny started to design their new 3D blaster *MDK*, they decided to take a different approach. Rather than attempt to create the most powerful video game gun ever, why not go one step further and create something even cooler – the most accurate video game gun ever! And guess what? That's just what they've done.

MDK is Shiny's first foray into the world of PC games (most of the shots on this page are taken from the PC version), although a PlayStation conversion is being worked on simultaneously. We don't normally cover PC games in GameFan, but seeing as the PlayStation version is still very early in development (more on that over the page), we thought you'd want to see as much of *MDK* as early as possible. Believe us – it's hot!








ZOOM IN ON LONG-RANGE TARGETS THEN BLOW THEM TO PIECES!





Shiny's stories are always cool, and *MDK* is no exception. In the future, mankind stumbles across a phenomenon known as streams – bands of energy which travel through space. Earth's scientists soon discover a way to tap the power of these streams, but in doing so unwittingly create an "off-ramp" for a hostile alien race who uses the streams to travel through space. Pretty soon the aliens arrive en masse, and construct vast moving cities which rumble across earth destroying everything in their path. Earth responds by attacking the aliens with everything they have, but to no avail. In a last-ditch attempt for survival, the earth's rulers recruit the talents of a hi-tech assassin named Kurt, who must infiltrate the cities and put a stop to the alien invasion from the inside.

STRUCTURE – *MDK* is broken down into eight different cities (it's not final), each constructed of a number of huge areas called 'arenas.' Each city has a different theme to it (e.g. a prison city or a lunatic asylum city) and it's Kurt's job to infiltrate these mobile metropolises, locate the main driver, and kill him before that city kills too many people. Throughout the game there is a meter at the bottom of the screen that indicates how many billions (!) of people have been annihilated, and the faster you can complete each level, the less people die. Your ultimate aim is to stop all the cities before they kill earth's entire populace! Talk about genocide.

Shiny claims that there will be between 70 to 80 arenas in the final version of *MDK*, and each one will be a unique area with a unique set of problems to solve. An arena could be anything from a city street full of aliens which must be killed, to a vast swimming pool which you cross on a hover bike. At one point Kurt enters a wide city clearing where a spaceship is refueling. You are constantly being attacked by aliens, and there appears to be no exit. What you must do is snipe out the area's alert droid (cunningly positioned high up) to stop the attacks, then shoot out the refueling cable on the spaceship. The spaceship de-stabilizes, and the pilot comes to the cockpit to see what the matter is. Snipe him and he slumps on the controls, causing the ship to veer off and crash through a nearby wall, thus providing you with an exit to the next arena.

GAMEPLAY – Although there are many different game styles in *MDK* (including flying through streams and free falling into cities), for the most part Kurt is controlled from a *Tomb Raider* style third person perspective. In this mode Kurt can run, jump, strafe, look up and down, activate his parachute and, of course, shoot. Even on the PC, *MDK* feels like a console game, with responsive controls and an intense pace. Kurt is easy to control, and players can jump right into the action with little practice. It's a lot like *Tomb Raider*, but with more responsive controls, more action and slightly less exploring.

THE GUN – From the basic third person perspective, pressing the shoot button activates Kurt's arm attached gatling gun. This is useful for engaging aliens at close range, as it auto-aims at anything directly in front of him (like *Tomb Raider*).



THE FACE OF DEATH.



However, the player also has the option to dismount the gun from Kurt's arm and place it on his face at any time. Kurt then enters into Sniper mode, and the view changes to inside Kurt's helmet (see pictures opposite).

Sniper Mode is one of the most amazing aspects of *MDK*. Although Kurt can't move, you can smoothly zoom in on ANY OBJECT at ANY DISTANCE with no clipping and no texture pixelization whatsoever! If you're really far away, the aliens won't be able to see you, and they just go about their everyday business, unaware that they're being watched. The gun is so accurate, you can shoot out an alien's eye from a mile away! No kidding!

P PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - SHINY/NEVERSOFT

PUBLISHER - PLAYMATES

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - UNKNOWN

AVAILABLE - 1ST QTR. '97

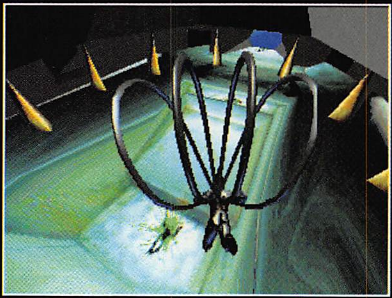


KNIGHTMARE

MURDER. DEATH. KILL. GREATEST. GAME. EVER?

MDK

A PLAYSTATION CONVERSION!



After intense negotiations (and large quantities of red wine) Shiny finally handed over the PlayStation conversion duties of *MDK* to Woodland Hills-based developers Neversoft. Previously Shiny was quoted as saying that a console version of MDK would not be possible on any of the existing home platforms (even N64), but apparently Neversoft showed Shiny an amazing PS 3D graphics demo that convinced them otherwise. The minimum spec for the PC version of *MDK* is a Pentium 90 PC equipped with a hard drive and eight megs of RAM. The PlayStation version has to make do with a 33 mhz CPU, a double speed CD ROM (approximately ten times slower than a hard drive) and only two megs of work RAM. Some difference!

After Neversoft ported over the initial PC code to the PS, the game was running at one frame per second!!! Neversoft claim that the final version will clock in at a silky smooth 30 frames per second (just like the PC version), but in order to achieve that goal there will have to be some graphical compromises.

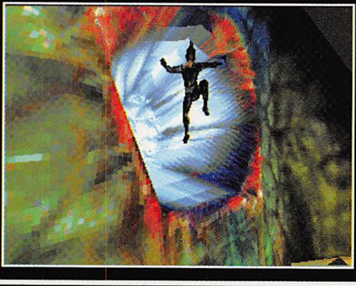


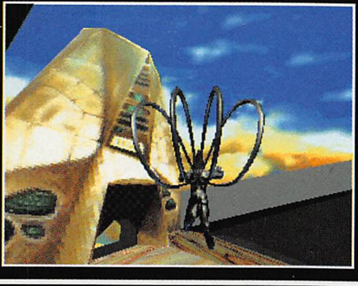
With eight megs of RAM available to store textures, PC *MDK* can afford to run at a much higher resolution (640 by 480) than the PS version. However, to compensate for this loss of detail, Neversoft have added a host of PS only graphical effects (such as lighting sourcing and more color), to take advantage of the PS's customized graphics chips. Neversoft also hopes to duplicate the amazing motion captured animation of PC *MDK*, by compressing the 1 meg animation files to fit the PS's storage capacity.

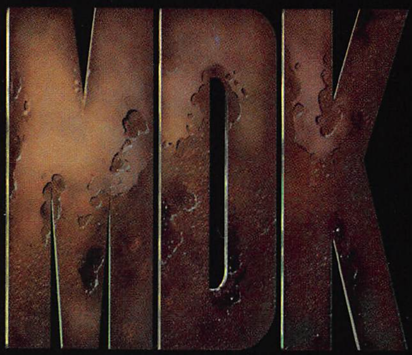
If you look at the difference in specs, Neversoft certainly has their work cut out for them. Yet, despite these differences, they are confident that they can deliver an accurate conversion of *MDK* in a remarkably short space of time. These preliminary shots look promising, and if they make good on their word, we could be looking at a 1997 PlayStation game of the year in the making.



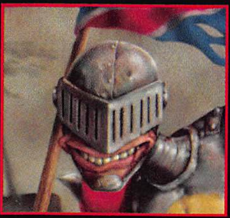
GF reporters negotiated the Neversoft security mesh and two large dogs to uncover the programmers (from left to right); Mick West, Mike Day, Christer Erickson and Joel Jewett.







KNIGHTMARE INTERVIEWS DAVID PERRY!



The time: 1500 hours, 7 November 1996. The place: Shiny HQ, Laguna Beach, California. The people: Knightmare and Waka. The mission: interrogate industry playboy and erstwhile chopper pilot David Perry for the lowdown on Shiny's latest baby: *MDK*. The following is an account of what transpired. More or less.

GF: Where did you get the idea for MDK *from?*

DP: One of the artists on the team, Nick Brady; he's very into that Aliens/James Cameron kind of stuff. He has a friend named Bob Stevenson who thinks very similarly. They generated the idea for *MDK* very quickly, then they did a demo video. That made me go "All right, that looks good… let's do it."

GF: Why did you choose to do MDK *on PC?*

DP: We're console people working on the PC because we don't want to work on Nintendo's cartridge. We are really making a console game on the PC – not just a generic PC game. It's annoying, as you're a little bit early. Next month you'll see some of the cool stuff that makes it nothing like a PC game at all, as far as action goes.

GF: How long has MDK *been in development?*

DP: Since February 1996.

GF: What's the average development period for a Shiny game?

DP: Normally six or seven months – very quickly. But we've never done either a 3D or a PC game before, so a lot of manual work had to happen on *MDK*. You know, just trying to get Windows '95 to friggin' work.

GF: How many people do you have working on MDK*?*

DP: Six. And eight for *Wild 9's* (another Shiny project).

GF: Are you (DP) doing any of the programming for any of these games?

DP: I'm not, sadly. I'm just not getting any programming time anymore – there's too much going on (grin). I wish I could… Maybe someday I'll get the chance to program again. I said to Dave Halverson that when we both retire we'll get together and write a Monitaur game.

GF: MDK *is a real departure from* Earthworm Jim 1 & 2. *Is this a deliberate step?*

DP: It is. I feel that we need to do this. If anyone tells me that Shiny is a platform game company again, I'll have to headbutt them.

GF: When I saw the demo running at the ECTS the thing that most impressed me was the gun – the way it zooms in. How did that come about?

DP: That was a nice idea. We were trying to think, "What's the next step in guns?" Everyone else is just strapping guns together, making bigger guns, and we were wondering what would make a decent improvement on that. The answer we came up with is: make the most accurate gun! Make a gun that can zoom in on someone a mile away, and is so accurate you can shoot them in the eye! Well, hey, now there's a good gun!



GF: Did you have any problems implementing the gun's accuracy?

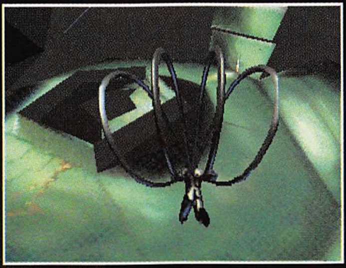
DP: Sure. Take this bird on my desk for example. In video games, if you want to shoot him, what you do is put a little invisible collision box around him. Then, if my bullet penetrates that box, the bird dies. It's quick, it's easy, and that's how most video games work. The problem is, if you have the most accurate gun of all time, you should be able to zoom in and zoom in until you're just looking at a little piece of the bird – like his beak or his chest. Then, if you shoot just under his beak, but in front of his chest, you should miss. The problem is, in the video game world, no-one ever bothers with that much accuracy. For it to work we have to check that bullet against every piece of his body in 3D, and then all the other enemies in the area, and then all of the walls.

GF: You can see to the horizon the whole time?

DP: You know how when you play games like *Daytona* you see the buildings pop up suddenly in the distance? The reason for that is clipping. The programmers have to set clipping at a certain distance – which means throwing away everything beyond that point – to keep the code running fast. But if you have this gun that can see for miles, you have to be able to see everything far away. So we can't throw anything anyway. In fact, we compounded our own problem because, in *MDK*, when you fire a bullet across a world, the bullet takes the camera with it. I can shoot a bullet and watch it fly through the world and hit a target which I might not even be able to see on my main screen!

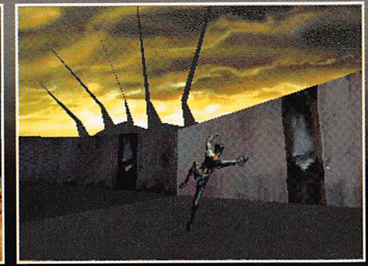
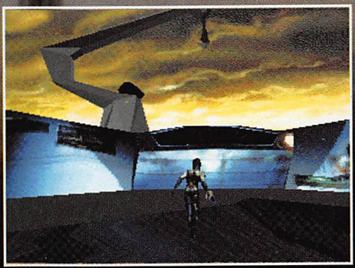
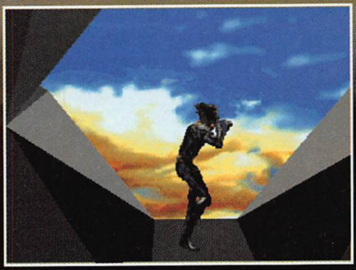
All screenshots of MDK on these two pages are taken from the PlayStation version.

GF: That's a lot to take on board for a first PC project.
DP: We're trying to get it done in record time too. We started with no engine or anything, and we've just worked from the ground up. We spent a lot of money just on the resources to get equations and stuff straight.
GF: One of the most impressive things about using the gun and zooming in is that the textures keep coherent right up to the eyeball and it still doesn't get blocky. How did you do that?
DP: I don't understand what people are doing with their memory in PC games. When we worked on Spectrums, we had 48k, and yet somehow we managed to get 40 level games into that 48k. Now we've got 8,000k and it's just so much space it's ridiculous! And yet somehow, people manage to use that all on most PC games. I don't know how in the world they are doing that! We've got so much space we can put in really detailed texture maps. Everything is texture mapped. *MDK* is textured mapped to death!
GF: How big is MDK*?*
DP: Well, we're having Tommy Tallarico do the music, and every level has it's own soundtrack. So we thought, "Okay, we'll get Tommy down and get him started," and we told Tommy we needed seventy soundtracks for this game. He was like, "You need what?!"

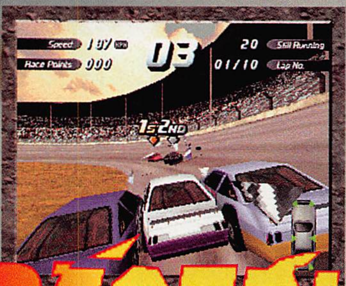


GF: 70 levels!!?
DP: Well there's 70 arenas. An arena is a room or a structure or building , and you're in that place, and it's got problems, and you have to solve those problems to move on to the next arena. There are basically seventy or eighty of those. Some of them take a while to play though, and some of them, if you're clever, you just run through.
GF: You just run through?
DP: This is kind of a twist to *MDK*: enemies have ears and eyes. If you run out into the open they'll see you, and if you make any noise they'll hear you. But if they're not looking your way and you just walk by quietly, they won't notice you. The idea is to create the feeling that you are in their world, and they are not really aware that you are there. You see guys just doing everyday things. You've stepped into their world.
GF: So what kind of AI do the monsters in MDK *have?*
DP: The intelligence is... Well, I don't want to say it's cheap, but it is a little bit. But that's what real video games are all about. They're not a simulation of life. We don't have NASA scientists upstairs working on the AI. Real video games are fun to play. We say to an enemy, 'The best way to kill him is to run over there, hide behind a wall and take a look. If you see him, stay behind a wall. If you don't, run over there.' So effectively it looks like things are being intelligent, but they're not really. They're smart because we're telling them what to do. We're telling them how to attack you. But if you're smart, you'll find tricks to get them out from behind the wall. You can do some very clever things. For example, there's an alert droid the aliens leave lying around that goes 'alert, alert' whenever it sees you. So you learn to take them out first. There's one room where you can actually open up the alert droid and get inside it, and just roll around among the aliens.
GF: One of the things I thought when I first saw the game, was just how cool it would be to have multi-player MDK*?*
DP: You know, we were thinking of doing that. I mean, imagine if you're playing link-up, you could sit in a corner somewhere and watch someone else in the distance running around looking for you, knowing that you could shoot them at any time. But then, what if there was a third person watching *you* the whole time, thinking, "Why is that guy just sitting there?!"
GF: But you're not going to do it?
DP: We're not going to do it right away. We're going to wait and see how the game performs first.
GF: MDK *is a game that actively encourages cold blooded murder. Do you have any kind of moral qualms about it?*
DP: Video games, for me, are not simulations. Simulations are cool, but they're another type of game entirely. As time goes on and the machines get better, simulations are going to get more and more realistic. I find that kind of boring. I don't really want to play soccer 'exactly,' I'd rather cheat and hack and play fantasy! Video games, for me, are about doing completely impossible things. I think that in the future, once the polygon argument goes away, things will start to side back to fantasy again. People want to play a game and get lost in a new world.
GF: I agree, but MDK *has one of the most realistic game engines I've ever seen. It might just be a video game, but zooming in on someone's eye and counting the seconds they have left to live is pretty chilling.*
DP: We would probably do it even a little *more* violent, but we're kind of holding on to our morals. I'm not saying that *MDK* doesn't have any nasty stuff, because it does, but on the other hand, it's not "over the top" violence. But hey, we could do that too! Believe me, if I wanted photo-realistic death I'd just kill a few programmers and film it (laughs). We could make it graphically disgusting, but there's no point to it. That's not where the future lies.
GF: Is that your face on Kurt?
DP: Um, that face is actually Tim, not me. He's the level designer for *MDK*. He just happens to be our motion capture guy as well. Yes. So that's actually his body, and everything Kurt does he had to act out.
GF: It's not you? It looks just like you.
DP: Everyone thinks Wex (from *Wild 9's*) looks just like me too.
GF: Dead ringer (laughs). Kurt is a motion captured sprite, but everything else is polygons right?
DP: Yes, but they're all motion captured too. What you've seen so far is all hand done, and it doesn't look nearly as good. We try to do all of the motion capture at the end.
GF: Have you added any incentive to people to make them want to replay the game, like hidden secrets?
DP: I really hate PC games where they hide secrets by making you press against a random wall – invisible things that you just have to chance across. That's just rubbish. What you need to do is see an anomaly, and decide for yourself if it's worth going for. I think video games have changed this year. A big argument I got into was: are points really necessary anymore? Do players really care if they score a point or not? We came to the conclusion that they don't. So from Aladdin on we didn't have points. But people were still collecting stuff, be it rings or stars or whatever, and now we feel that even that has gotten kind of old. Do you really care? Are you really going to risk a life to get another ring? The feeling with *Wild 9's* and *MDK* is that there should be no pointless pickup. If it's not worth picking up, it shouldn't be there. If you see something, you should really want that thing. It's should always have some great benefit to you.
GF: Are there any power-ups in MDK*?*
DP: Your character has lots of power ups in the game. You can get diamond tipped bullets which can penetrate anything and kill anyone with one shot. Then he has a sort of grenade with a camera attached to it. If you're close to death you can throw it into an area to see if there's anything there waiting for you first. You've also got things like earthquake hammers, which you attach to the floor and it causes an earthquake by hammering the floor very hard... There are a lot of things that you aren't expecting.
GF: Is there any plans for a franchise for MDK *like* EWJ *or* Wild 9's*? Any kind of show or film?*
DP: We're expecting to get toys and a movie. At least we hope so.
GF: A live action or a CG movie?
DP: Actually it would be a combination of both. What I'd like to have is CG characters with human faces blended perfectly onto the model.
GF: MDK *really pushes the contemporary PC technology to the max. How on earth are Neversoft going to convert this mother?*
DP: They're going to have to use tricks. They're not going to do it the hard way, they're going to have to do it the tricky way.
GF: Have you seen anything of the console version yet?
DP: Not a thing. At some point I've got to see it (laughs). (See, GameFan scoops even the game's creator!)
GF: Do you think it's possible?
DP: Hmmm...yes I do. But they've got their work cut out for them. There's going to be no sleep before Christmas.
GF: Why did you pick Neversoft to do the conversion?
DP: They came and saw me, and I liked them, and they sent me a demo to impress me. That combination got them the deal.
GF: How come you are not doing it in-house?
DP: Because we just don't have enough people. I find it very hard to find people that are good. We have a job advert on our web page, which is www.shiny.com, for anyone, anybody that's good.
GF: Thanks a lot.

GAMEFAN WOULD LIKE TO THANK EVERYONE AT SHINY AND NEVERSOFT FOR ALLOWING US TO INVADE THEIR OFFICES!

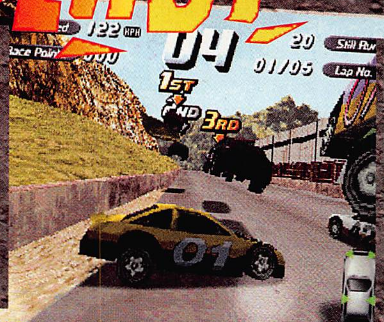






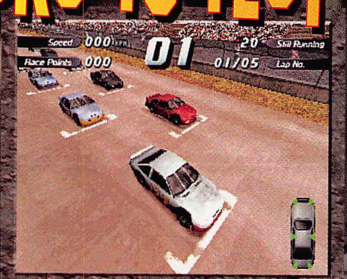
DESTRUCTION DERBY 2

I found the first *Destruction Derby* to be excellent fun initially, and then the limitations of the game began to impede on my playing (those roadways weren't big enough to drive down, and those CPU drivers had the annoying habit of ramming your tail and spinning you to the back of the crowd). A year later, and the might of Psygnosis again stomps back with a sequel (have you noticed these guys have the golden touch lately?), promising more tracks, more car carnage, extra frame rate and many fine touches. Can the company that brought you *Wipeout XL* continue their domination? Read on and find out...


KRUNCH! SEVEN NEW TRACKS TO TEST YOUR METAL!







You'll first encounter an intro which I personally found rather disappointing; instead of the awesome CG of *Wipeout XL*, there's some slightly grainy movies of the game in progress, spliced with rather disappointing visuals of, er, men in cars. After this, the time comes to rock along to some, er, *interesting* guitar-based tunes, and then the time comes along to select your vehicle and burn some serious rubber.

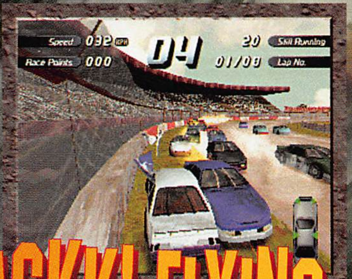
The developers, Reflections, have scraped the frankly embarrassing texture-maps from the sides of the cars in favor of cool-looking paint jobs which make all those 20 competitors look all the more authentic in the combat zone. Choose from three types of car as before, and then select your preferred method of car disposal; a huge arena where 20 cars have one purpose; to home in and destroy you, a straight race or a wrecking derby. Different tactics apply depending on your situation, but veteran *Destruction Derby* fans should know what to expect; the gameplay is essentially unchanged.

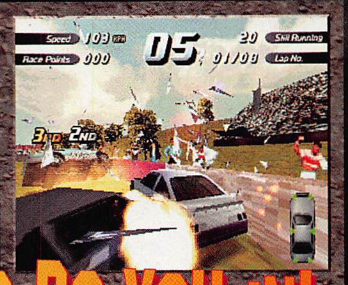
So what is this gameplay then? Well, that's the part of the game









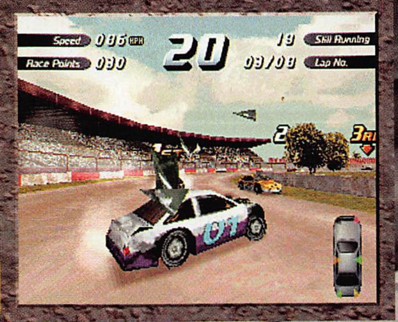
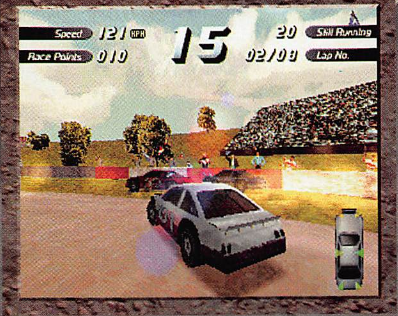
SMACKK! FLYING DEBRIS COULD DO YOU IN!

I'm most disappointed with. Those experts at *DD* should have the game licked relatively quickly as all those skills honed from their previous *DD*-based excursions can be utilized here. *DD* virgins, however, are going to have their work cut out just simply surviving the racing courses, as the CPU cars are completely unforgiving. What I found immensely annoying is the fact that you can be quite happily chugging down a straight track in first position, with some cool lens flare going on in the background, and then... BAM!! Some other competitor crumples your rear end, you fish-tail into a wall and by the time 15 other cars have rammed you, you're hobbling around in eighteenth place. This happens constantly for the first three hours of play. If that sounds fun, then rush out and buy this immediately. But for those requiring fair play, stay away.



And then there's four new bowls to fight in. To begin with, those 20 competitors all baying for your blood can produce some really spectacular effects ("Reverse..." Kaboom!! "There goes a wheel! Whoa! I'm spinning through the air!" KRUNCH!!), but after numerous occasions, the fact that you'll total your vehicle no matter what you do overrides any sense of fun this feature once had. There's no doubt those visuals are really cool (good enough to entice you to buy it, in fact), just be prepared to clamber out of smoking wreckage every single time you engage the Bowl mode.

Graphically, there's a whole load more going on; from the excellent flame and smoke effects to the frame rate (an almost constant 25 fps). And that's not all; there's some pretty impressive jumps to take along the course, most courses are now wide enough to fit a car down, your car now loses wheels (but still keeps on going!) and can be flipped onto its roof, but for all these graphical improvements, that shallow gameplay simply remains the same. And I doubt very much if anyone is going to drag their television and PlayStation to their friend's house for some two-player action (unless there's two copies of *Wipeout XL* and *Ridge Racer Revolution* in the house).

Instant thrills is what *Destruction Derby 2* is all about; longevity isn't even in the equation. I found this to be a title that was shockingly similar to the first game, but for real-time deformation and crumpled cars, you can't do any better. Excellent fun... for about 15 minutes. *CH*

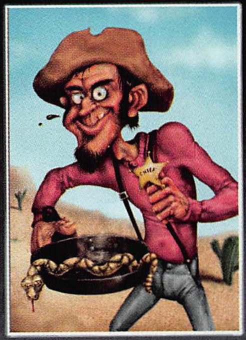




R REVIEW

PlayStation

- DEVELOPER - REFLECTIONS
- PUBLISHER - PSYGNOSIS
- FORMAT - CD
- # OF PLAYERS - 1
- DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED
- AVAILABLE - NOW



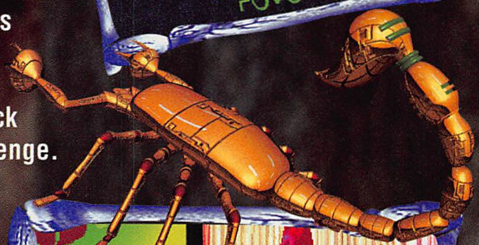
CHIEF HAMBLETON
THE MOST CAR CARNAGE YOU CAN HAVE IN A HALF HOUR!







In possibly the coolest video game idea ever, Boss Studios (the guys with the goriest logo in the world) have come up with the world's first arachnid-based video game (unless you count *Tokyo Insect Zoo*), starring a mad scientist and a host of his bug-eyed friends. This is the world of *Spider*, where an evil organization takes a rather active dislike to your experiments and guns you down as you're about to perform some serious spider surgery. As luck would have it, your mind is transported into your favorite cyber-tarantula, and after a quick insanity check, you set off in search of revenge.



All of this is beautifully described in the epic opening cinema lasting well over a minute, and then the game begins in earnest; at this time you'll realize just what Boss Studios have in store for you. You'll begin your spider quest in the laboratory where you got toasted, and in addition to getting used to your new spider form, you find all your other insect experiments are also loose as well! Now's the time to find mechanical tarantula legs and launch mini-rockets, boomerangs and even poison gas at your potentially deadly new enemies. Once you tore the legs of flies... now they're coming atcha larger than life!




The game mechanics are very similar to *Pandemonium*; this is a side-scrolling platform affair where you leap, fire at foes and collect CDs – there's a number

Spider



PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - BOSS STUDIOS	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - BMG	DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - FEBRUARY '97

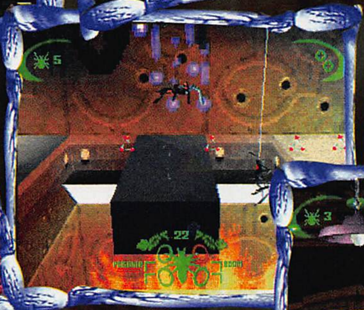


CHIEF HAMBLETON Catches thieves just like flies!









of them on each level – and they're perfect for reaching the more, er, strange levels (like the cool '70s zone complete with lava lamps and day-glo wallpaper!). Everything in this title is comprised of polygons, from the awesomely animated spider himself to his many opponents (which include red-eyed rats, a praying mantis and vicious scorpions).

Once you're engaged in feeler-to-feeler combat with your foe, prepare for cool light-sourced explosions (*Spider*'s insects don't so much splitch as explode into shards of light), and there's weapon power-ups throughout the whole game; the coolest part is that they actually fit onto your spider's front legs, and you can choose which 'leg' to employ at any given moment.

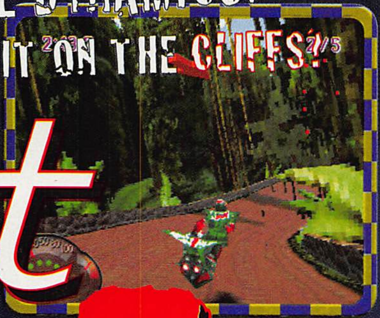
The rest of your eight-legged exploration takes you throughout zones on a mission to stop these gung-ho criminals who took your life so mercilessly. Scuttle from your initial laboratory through sewers, city streets, parks and more in this novel approach to platform shenanigans. Boss has taken a cool idea, woven an interesting and twisting plot into the mix and topped it off with numerous graphical touches. Although I've some reservations regarding the actual spider's movement and the way the game plays, I'm really looking forward to engaging rival black arachnids and jumping from wall to floor (remember, these spiders stick to anything!). We'll be back to scurry through the whole game very soon! ***CH***







SUPER-REALISTIC BIKE DYNAMICS!
CAN YOU CUT IT ON THE CLIFFS?


Jet Moto





In an article featured in the November *Forbes*, the SingleTrac story, which chronicles the company's early roots and amazing success after writing one of the first games for the PlayStation, is one heck of a good read. Michael Ryder, SingleTrac's president, went from managing nuclear reactors to heading up the commercial business group at 3-D graphics pioneer Evans & Sutherland, 'til one day Sony came a-knockin' on Evans & Sutherland's door and the rest is history. The original three-man team has blossomed to 45 since the success of *Twisted Metal* & *Warhawk*, and now their 3rd foray into the growing PS arsenal is ready to rock our world.

Like racing? How 'bout tremendous challenges? Both scream to the surface in *Jet-Moto*, possibly the deepest PS racer to date. Three classes, with three tracks in each may not sound like much, but given the number of competitors, each with deep-seated characteristics which absolutely determine your success, *Jet* becomes an exercise in skill and racing prowess. You won't even see the deeper tracks until you've placed in the top three in round one, which alone stands as a mighty challenge.




R REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - SINGLETRAC

PUBLISHER - SCEA

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED

AVAILABLE - NOW



E. STORM
I'll have a Mountain Dew & a Butterfinger!

CYPRESS RUN IS MAXED OUT BABY!
SWERVE OVER STUMPS IN SWAMPS!






A racer so challenging and deep needs to be both unique and fun. Here is where SingleTrac has scored the highest. They could have made a Jet-Ski game or, a Moto-Cross game. Instead they've combined the two... as only they can. These craft do both, yet handle differently than each. Anyone who's played *Warhawk* knows what SingleTrac can do with physics, and they've taken it to the extreme with *Jet*, creating vehicles so utterly controllable it'll take you hours just to figure the tendencies of each individual team's mounts.

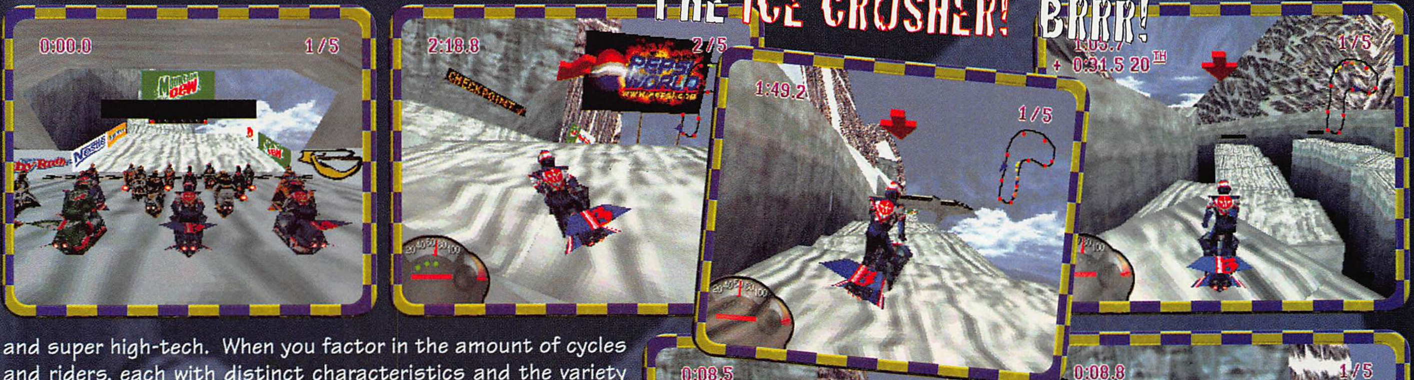
Once you've found your ultimate character (mine is Miko), it's off to polygonal playfields where SingleTrac moves around massive texture mapped environments at a brisk 20fps. The courses range from the vast wide open sea, to the short and tight, all the way to massive twisting ridges, icy cold,





DEW IT, DUDE!

THE ICE CRUSHER! BRRR!





and super high-tech. When you factor in the amount of cycles and riders, each with distinct characteristics and the variety among levels, you realize that never before has such diversity been available in a racing title.

So... is it fun? Well, if your idea of fun is doing battle with twenty skilled racers at a time, grappling around tight turns, catching big air, digging in to u-turns, and goin' with the flow by sea, you'll be in heaven. If you're looking for the easy win in a game instantly dial-able however, you'll be lost in this complex racer. Personally, I'm hooked, even more so than I was with *WaveRace*, and that's saying a lot... a whole lot. It's the play mechanics, realistic competition from 19 competitors thirsty for the win, rad course design, and too-cool-for-gaming tunes that keep me coming back again and again.

I love the depth that a good CD game offers. I have it with *Crash* for platforming, *Tomb Raider* for adventure, and now with *F-1* and *Jet-Moto*, I have it for racing as well.

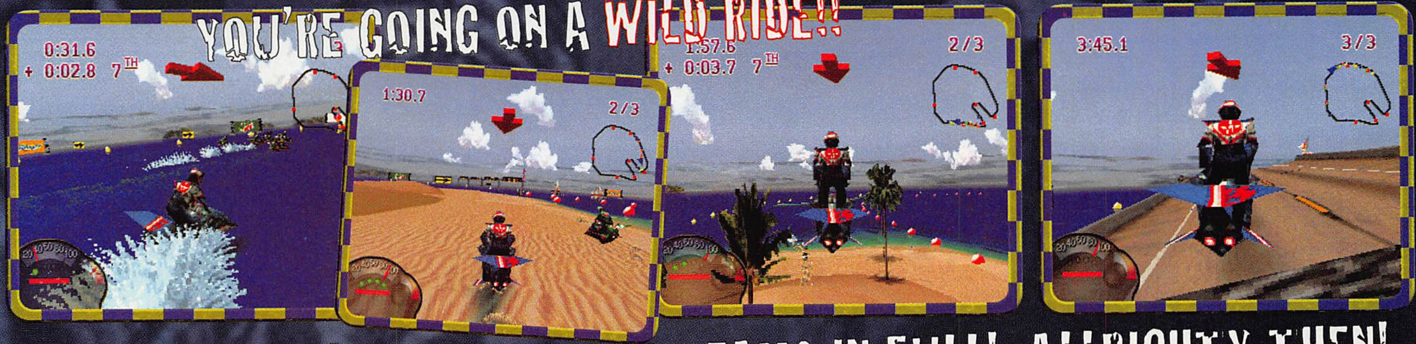
Could I be happier with my PlayStation right now? Nope. This console has virtually every realm of gaming covered. My weekends seem shorter and shorter as the hot titles continue to stack up week after week. What *Jet-Moto* brings to the table is yet another PS exclusive that will surely become etched in gamers psyches and hopefully spawn a sequel or two.

As 32-bit gaming continues to blossom and find its legs, the industry continues to re-write itself as the old becomes further a part of history and the new a stepping-off point of things to come. *Jet-Moto* will surely quench even the fiercest racing fans thirst for thrills, competition and depth. I suggest you check it out at your earliest convenience. ***ES***



THIS COURSE IS WAY COOL!

YOU'RE GOING ON A WILD RIDE!!



LET'S LOOK AT THE TEAMS IN FULL! ALLRIGHTY THEN!



TEAM PROFILE
BUTTERFINGER

LOW ACCELERATION AND MASS MAKE WAY FOR AWESOME HANDLING AND GOOD LIFT. TEAM BUTTERFINGER FARES WELL IN THE WIDE OPEN SEA, BUT FALLS APART IN TIGHT HILLY TERRAIN.



TEAM PROFILE
MOUNTAIN DEW

DEW CHECK OUT MIKO FOR GREAT OVERALL PERFORMANCE. THE MOUNTAIN DEW TEAM ON THE WHOLE IS YOUR BEST BET FOR SUPERIOR BALANCE. GOOD LIFT AND GREAT HANDLING OUT-WEIGH MASS IN THE TIGHTER LATE ROUNDS.



TEAM PROFILE
AXION

TETSUJIN, FROM TEAM AXION SEEMS TO FLY BY YOU IN THE GAME EFFORTLESSLY. HIS STATS LEAD YOU TO BELIEVE HE'S THE CLEAR CHOICE FOR VICTORY. HOWEVER, AFTER BEING PUMMELED I RETURNED QUICKLY TO THE MTN. DEW TEAM. AXION THOUGH, IS A STRONG TEAM.



TEAM PROFILE
K2

HERE'S A TIP FROM GARY, OUR CRACK RACER. "QUICK JESSIE IS THE KEY TO MAN STYLE RACING" GARY GIVES A LOT OF TIPS BUT THE RESULTS ARE USUALLY LESS THAN IMPRESSIVE. HER LACK OF MASS EQUALS GARY'S LACK OF COORDINATION. DEW IT DEW IT...

POWER MOVE

PRO-WRESTLING MOVE NO. 4



THE CRANIAL CRUNCH



HARDCORE 4X4

TAKE IT TO THE BONE!!!











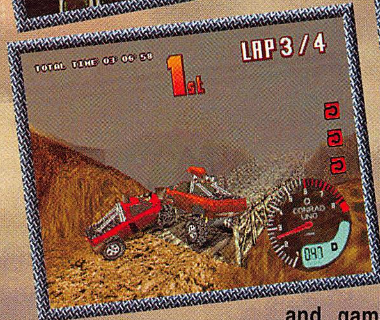














Sheffield UK developers Gremlin are best known for their gore-filled *Loaded* (and its even bloodier sequel). What they're less likely to be remembered for is their truck racing title, *Hardcore 4X4*. That's not to say that the visuals and game engine aren't anything short of impressive; it's just that the game doesn't really bear up to closer scrutiny. Let's off-road and find out more...

The perfectly adequate options allow you to choose from one of half a dozen trucks (varying in road handling and color), six courses, various weather conditions (from bright sunlight to hideous blizzards), transmission and type of game (trial, championship or a single race). Then you're greeted with a lovely (but static) loading screen for about five seconds... and then the racing starts!

Except this isn't as much about racing as plowing through mud tracks (ranging from some distinctly *Dirt Dash* inspired scenery to around an active volcano!). The game mechanics are a perfect showcase here; you'll see your 4X4 bounce and scrape just like the real thing across undulating hills, bumps, valleys and craters. Viewing this on screen, you'll be struck by just how impressive everything looks. And then I inspected the whole package a little closer...

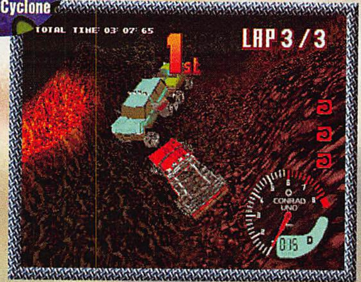
And this is when the game started to show some weighty problems. First of all, there's no indication of where to go (apart from some British-style signposts dotted here and there); indeed the track looks like it goes off in one direction, but really changes texture and forces you to turn maniacally until you master the course. This 'mastering' is very simple; real racing fans should have this game licked in about an hour (I managed 1st for the first five courses on my initial attempt). There's four different viewpoints, but of course the exterior view is the easiest to use. Worst of all, though, has to be the announcer who not only irritates you to the point of insanity, but also uses phrases which are so blatantly out of date ("Cowabunga!") that you wonder if the developers put them in as some sort of joke...

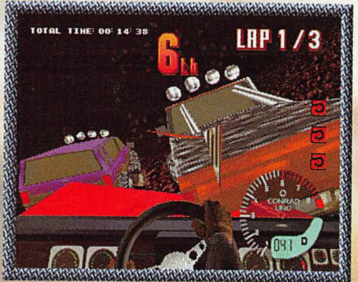
The main problem is the convincing sensation of speed – there ain't one. Instead you're confined to chugging about at 30 kph, memorizing that blind corner and waiting for those drone trucks to ram your bumper and spin you around without warning. No real scenery to speak of, but it certainly looks pretty enough and plays adequately unless you're after anything more than a day's play... another good reason to rent your PlayStation games before buying them. ***CH***











R REVIEW | PlayStation

DEVELOPER -ASC	# OF PLAYERS -1-2
PUBLISHER - ASC	DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW



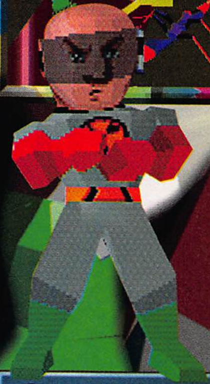
CHIEF HAMBLETON HARD CORE... YEAH, THAT'S ME!



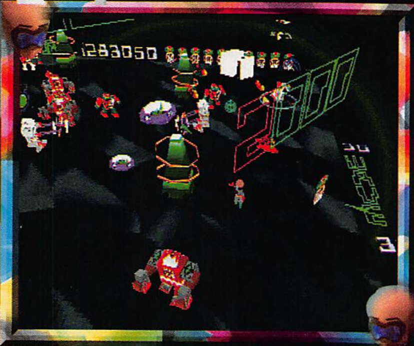
Just cause he's a joker doesn't mean he plays with a full deck.
Ante up to Crystal Dynamics' fastest, endorphin-based 3D action game. Your team of fellow speed-mongers includes Nikki, Fargus and Sid – an acrobatic wizard, a slightly twisted jester and his maniacal puppet-on-a-stick. Blur through unbelievably spacious levels of their deranged 3D kingdom while shape-changing into a fire-blasting dragon or raging rhino. Just sit down and get taken for a ride, it's pure rocket fuel.
Pandemonium!™
Official Sega Seal of Quality
Kids to Adults K-A Ages 6+
Check out our new website at http://www.crystald.com
This official seal is your assurance that this product meets the highest quality standards of Sega™. Buy games and accessories with this seal to be sure that they are compatible with the Sega Saturn™ System. Sega and the Sega Saturn are trademarks of SEGA ENTERPRISES, LTD. PlayStation is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Crystal Dynamics, the Crystal Dynamics logo, Pandemonium! the Pandemonium! logo and the related characters are trademarks of Crystal Dynamics. ©1996 Crystal Dynamics. All rights reserved. Call 1-800-771-3772 for Game Rating Information.
Crystal Dynamics™
PlayStation™
Soon Available on PC CD-Rom

Robotron X









REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - PLAYER ONE

PUBLISHER - WILLIAMS

FORMAT - CD

\# OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER



GLITCH
HOW 'BOUT A CORONARY?

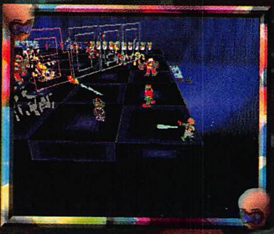
Robotron X...vacuumed into the techno-chaos...screen fried eyes begging for more. Merciless, killjoy freaks, pounding death from all sides. My tiny guns flare and whole ranks of mechanized beast incinerate into pixel doom. I hunger for more. I crave the carnage. My weapon seeks without judgement. *But they just keep coming...*

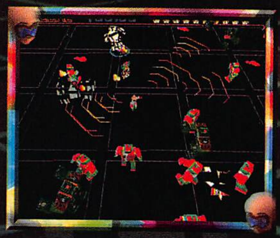
Robotron X has two hundred (200!) levels playable in three different modes: easy, normal, and insane. The easy mode truly caters to those who can't handle the chaos of *Robotron X* ('cause man, it's EASY), normal is for talented gamers, and insane is for the immortal, or the Flash, or somebody with a nervous system goin' way too fast. Into the game we go...



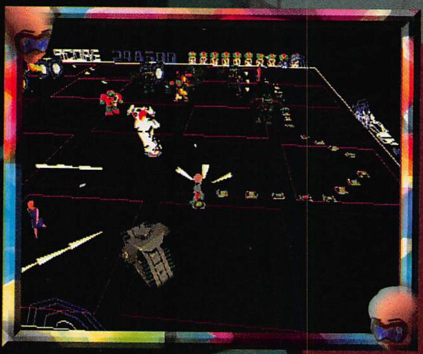


A typical game of *Robotron X* goes a little like this: You're stuck in a square-shaped arena, and the first wave of enemies arrive on the scene. Quick, take out the first squad, run into the corner, and shoot diagonally to stuff the flow of bad guys. There's too many now! Abandon your foxhole and attack! A shield icon appears, but it's way, way over there, and fifteen freaks are moanin' to take you out. You move around the edges of the arena, saving a few innocent humans along the way, and steal a quick glance at the shield. It's there, but five Brainheads are in your face. "I'm dead, I'm dead!" you scream, just as a power-up materializes next to you. Ah, the three-way shot! You're loaded now, so bust through the pack and grab that shield. Big guns *and* defense, so you think you're set, huh? Suddenly, twenty enemies appear outta nowhere! Get back to it, dude.





I dig this game. The textured polygon enemies and arenas are cool and the cyber-influenced color scheme is awesome. Angles can be changed mid-game, from a follow-cam to a handy overhead view. The control is perfect, using the PS's diamond button configuration (a la *Smash TV*) to allow eight directional shooting, and the power-ups (two-way/three-way shots, and shields), while unspectacular, get the job done. The sound effects are mostly low key, but you've never heard such psycho hard-core techno.

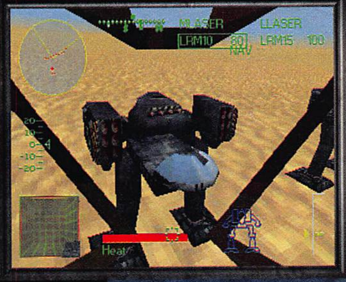


This could have been a nostalgic rant about the virtues of reborn classics, but instead I've described *Robotron X* as it is: An eye-killing, button-pounding test of your reactions and skill, juiced up with cool PlayStation power and hot music. The computer rocks my world, and I keep goin' back for more...a glutton for punishment and lovin' every second of it! *G*

MECHWARRIOR 2

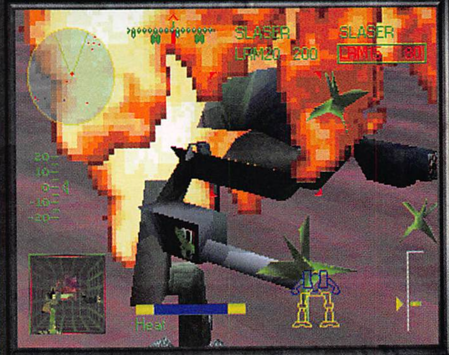
A NEW AGE OF COMBAT IN THE 31ST CENTURY! MECH STYLE, BABY!



In the 31st century the earth has become a post-apocalyptic wasteland, ravaged by nuclear war and environmental disasters. The survivors have grouped together to form communities called Clans, futuristic gangs locked in a constant battle for possession of the last remaining natural resources. Because of the inhospitable planet surface, most of these skirmishes are fought using giant Battlemechs: ultra-powerful war machines piloted by a single human – a *MechWarrior*.

MechWarrior 2 was a huge hit on PC CD-ROM a year ago, and now Activision is hoping to replicate that success on the 32-bit consoles, with enhanced conversions to both the Saturn and PlayStation. I played the PC version quite a lot when it came out, and must admit I was initially doubtful that it would make a very good console game. But after playtesting this pre-Alpha, I'm inclined to change my mind.



Even though the build of *MechWarrior 2* that you see before you is very, very, early (maybe 10%), it's already apparent that Activision has done a superb job of translating the PC game engine to the humble PlayStation. It's too early to talk about what the final version will look like, but if this pre-alpha is anything to go by then things are coming along well. It already runs at a decent frame rate with light sourced and gouraud shaded polygons.

The question of how the PlayStation pad would duplicate the complex PC keyboard and mouse control system has also been answered: surprisingly well! Every button is used, with some requiring a double tap to activate a different function. The throttle button for instance requires a single press to increase speed and a double tap to stop. It's a bit complex, but it works.



MechWarrior 2 has three different modes of play: the campaign game, instant action, and training. In campaign mode (the main game) you play the part of a cadet MechWarrior who is just starting out on his career as a mech pilot. First you must declare your allegiance to one of two Clans (the Wolf Clan or the Jade Falcon Clan), and then attempt to climb your way up the ranks by successfully completing a series of missions. Your ultimate aim is to attain the rank of Kahn, Clan leader.

The game mechanics aren't in place yet, and there's only one mission available (there will be 30 in the finished version, with 16 different mechs), but the PC intro by James Cameron's effects company Digital Domain is present in all its rendered glory. The only other thing I want to add at this point is that both home versions WILL feature link-up play (co-operative and deathmatch), something which even the original PC version didn't have. Stay tuned, Battlemech fans. *K*

ACTIVISION'S MECH SIMULATOR ON THE SONY PLAYSTATION!





P PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - QUANTUM FACT.
PUBLISHER - ACTIVISION
FORMAT - CD
OF PLAYERS - 1-2 W/ LINK
DIFFICULTY - N/A
AVAILABLE - FEBRUARY '97



KNIGHTMARE
One hot conversion, comin' up!

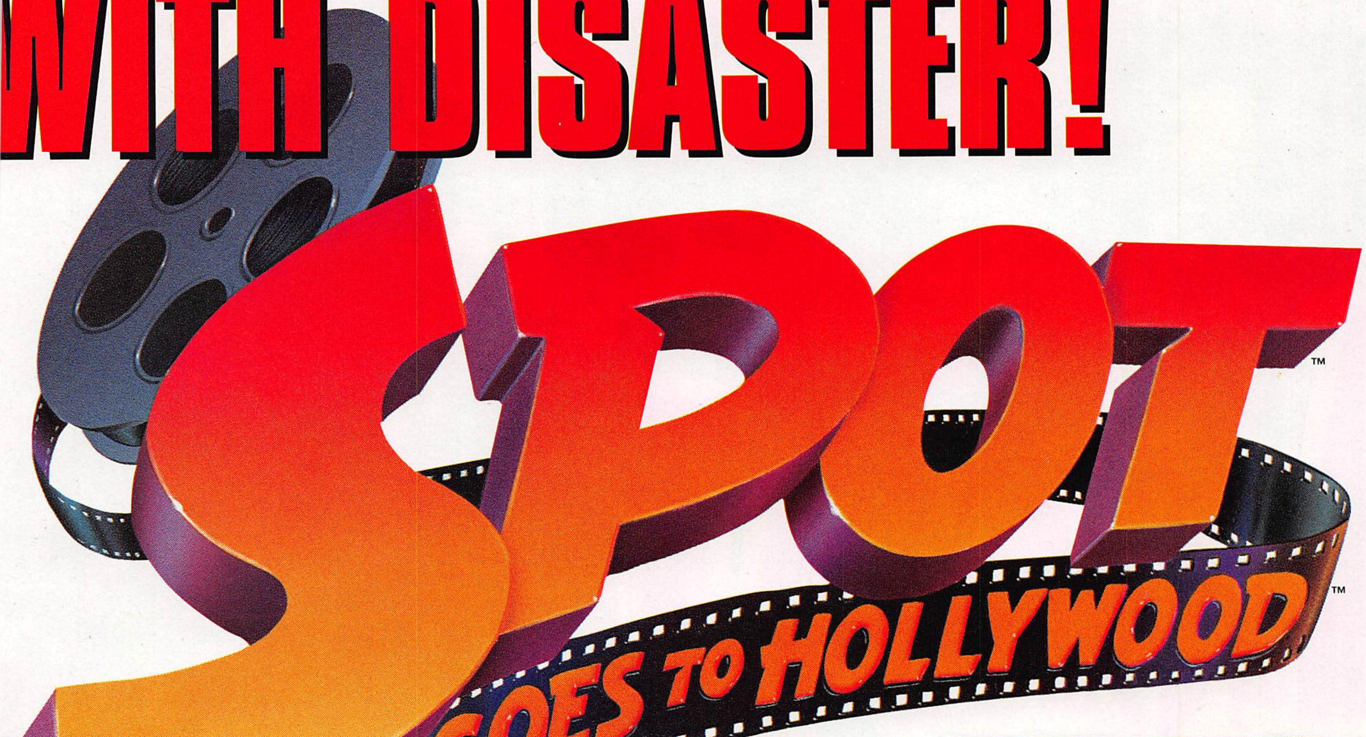
HE'S FLIRTING

"Hey,
she came on
to me first."

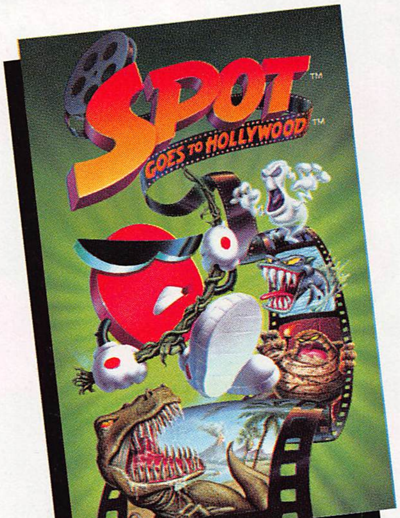


™

WITH DISASTER!







Pirates, piranhas, monsters and mutants. SPOT's somehow managed to land himself in a world made of movies. Even his agent can't help him now. Can you? In the movie-spoof worlds of classic blockbusters, westerns, Kung Fu, UFO's and a whole bunch more, the player's job is simple: keep SPOT alive long enough for him to "do" lunch. Not become lunch.

- Over 20 levels of arcade-style action and puzzle gameplay
- 20 minutes of integrated cinematics
- Rich, vibrant graphics with isometric viewpoint and 3-D rendered worlds
- CD-quality sound

Virgin INTERACTIVE entertainment · Burst · PlayStation™ · SEGA SATURN™ · KIDS TO ADULTS K-A CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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PLATFORM THRILLS WERE NEVER THIS GOOD! OR THIS HARD! TRUE MAN-STYLE GAMEPLAY REQUIRED!







The Adventures of Lomax







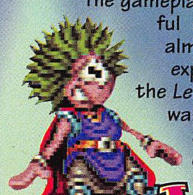


It's always bittersweet playing an extra high-quality hand-drawn platformer; even though you're having a great time, your subconscious knows that in just a few short months or years the genre will disappear utterly. *Lomax* is such a cerebellum-contortingly fantastic example that the manic joy/grief action seriously threatened my sanity. If you feel yourself mentally equipped to handle such fearsome duality, *Lomax* is for you.

The story, as in most platformers, is so inane I won't even... well, OK... I will. You see, the nasty Evil Ed has kidnapped those cute li'l Lemmings, and only one person can save them: Lomax! Yeah! Hot stuff. Anyway, plotlines have little bearing on fun, and *Lomax* is brimming over with it... until around level 18 (out of over 40!), when things become so hellishly hard that in most games you'd simply quit out of sheer disgust. Something about *Lomax*, however, will draw you back and keep you riveted, no matter what cruel and unusual punishment lies in your way.

The gameplay is largely standard platform fare, but with the shameful dearth of games representing this genre lately it's almost... novel. Numerous additions to the stock platform experience were included in the form of power-ups based on the *Lemmings* series of games, like the ability to dig through walls and build platforms. Also, you can move into and out of the background ala *Clockwork Knight 2* or *Wario* on the Virtual Boy – very cool stuff.

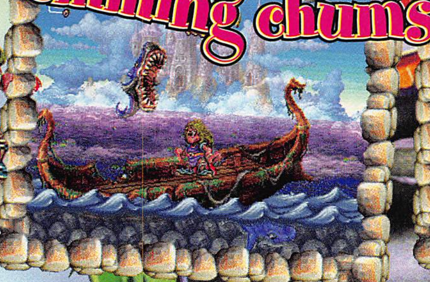




Only Lomax can save his lemming chums from Evil Ed!









Spin, stomp and swirl through 44 levels!





All well and good, but the true beauty of *Lomax* lies in its meticulously crafted atmosphere and level design. This game is flat-out *gorgeous* – a full-scale assault on the eyes. As readers of GameFan know, I'm not the biggest supporter of Western-style art, so you can imagine the quality: *Lomax* features literally ten layers of parallax (By the way, according to the books, that's impossible on the PlayStation!), animation that would cause even Capcom artists to start, and an overall use of color and texture that just makes you feel... *happy.*

The music and sound effects are appropriately floaty and Saturday morning cartoon, but they get the job done. Lomax's voice, however, gets distressingly unpleasant after time... he makes an ostensibly "cute" noise every time he jumps, and his repeated winsome cries of "Let's go!" and "Oh no!" etc. leave a nasty, cotton-candy flavored aftertaste in my mouth.

The bottom line, in my opinion, is this: If you're a member of the old school of gaming (that is, NES and earlier) you'll appreciate this game for its precision platforming that hearkens back to the glory days. No offense, but gamers weaned on polygons probably won't be able to cope. The insanely talented Scandinavian duo of Henk Nieborg and Erwin Kloibhofer (the masters behind *Flink*... can you believe TWO PEOPLE made this game? Literally!) have made gaming a better place once again, and I congratulate them for creating a 2D PS game that would be amazingly impressive on the *Saturn.* **NR**



REVIEW | PlayStation

DEVELOPER - PSYGNOSIS	# OF PLAYERS -1
PUBLISHER - PSYGNOSIS	DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW



NICK ROX
GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN...

BUBSY 3D

After a purr-omising debut followed by two fur-getful sequels, Bubsy bounces back in a 3D adventure worth taking...







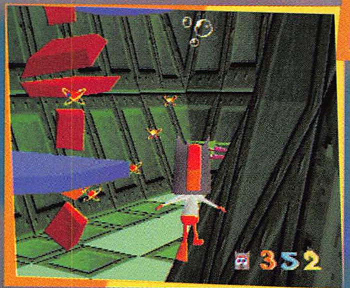




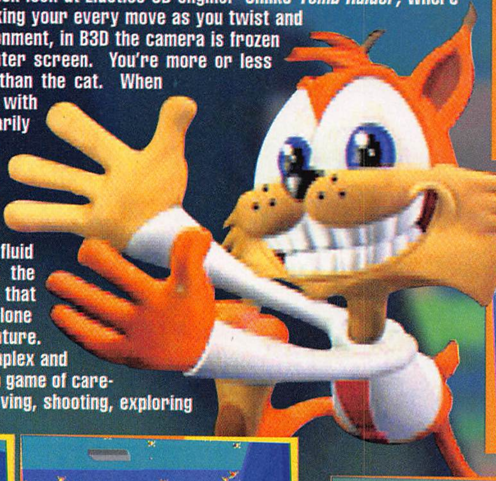


After Bubsy's hurtin' debut on the foiled Jag-you-were I thought for sure I could kiss this cat goodbye. Bubsy's gone from one of the most hyped 16-bit debuts ever to near obscurity in the years since the SNES and Genesis reigned supreme, but now, he's back. His original owner has scooped him up, modeled him in impressive 3D, and wrapped him in an all new 3D adventure.

First things first. Go directly into the options and turn off the voice... do it now. Now, let's get the fur ball rolling with a quick look at Eidetics 3D engine. Unlike *Tomb Raider*, where the camera follows behind, tracking your every move as you twist and turn through a panoramic environment, in B3D the camera is frozen behind Bubsy, who pivots at center screen. You're more or less turning the background rather than the cat. When Bubsy jumps the camera follows, with the foreground dropping temporarily out of sight to reveal an overhead view. This blocks your peripheral vision for a spell as the foreground snaps back into play, but rarely causes any real frustration. *Bubsy 3D* isn't the fluid game that *Tomb Raider* is, but the designers haven't really built it that way. The emphasis wasn't to clone but to create a unique 3D adventure. The game is designed around complex and very vast 3D worlds, but this is a game of careful stop and go, timing, puzzle solving, shooting, exploring







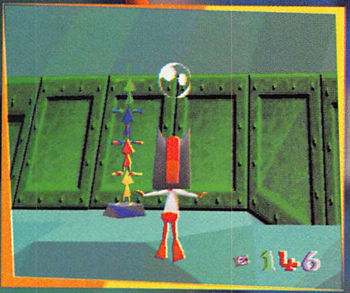








Look for peculiarities like this un-texture mapped wall. They often reveal the road to the rocket piece or hidden switches and the like.

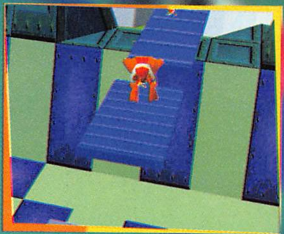


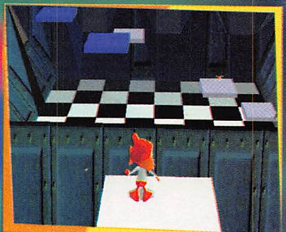




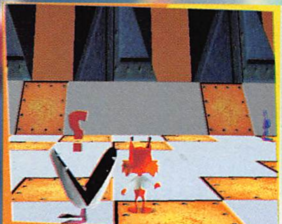
Woolie totem poles point the way... Defectors?











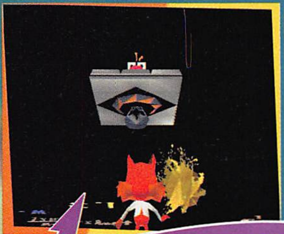
R REVIEW

PlayStation

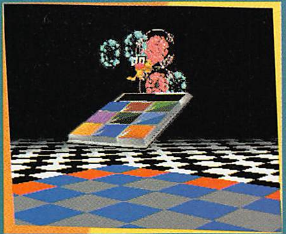
DEVELOPER - EIDETIC
PUBLISHER - ACCOLADE
FORMAT - CD
OF PLAYERS - 1-2
DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
AVAILABLE - NOW

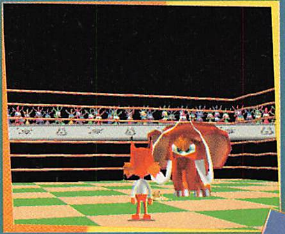


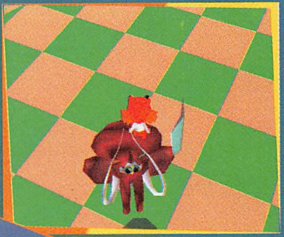
E. STORM
Fur-bearin' fun on Planet Rayon!

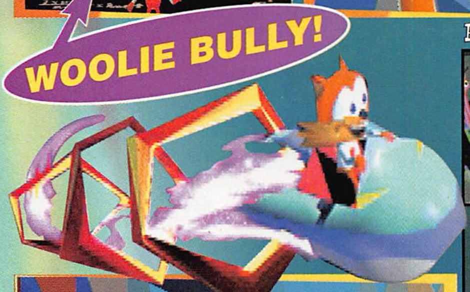




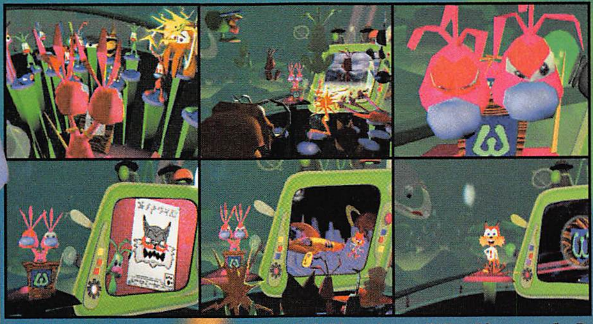




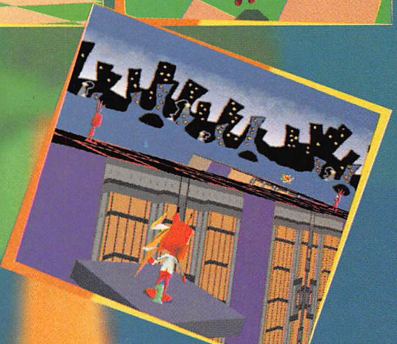




RAYON... YESTERDAY

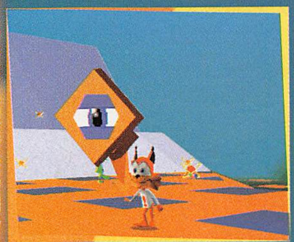


Bubsy's loose on Rayon! What's a Woolie to do?

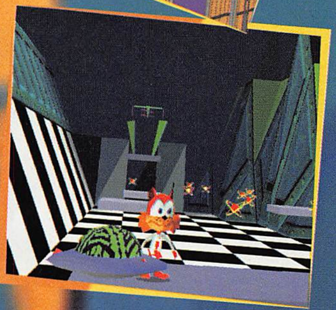




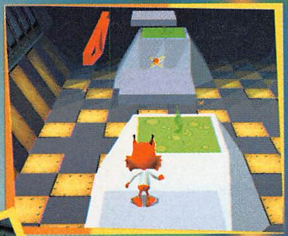
and mega platforming. It's not only unique, but slickly produced and well executed. It's one of those games you have to settle into. But once you do, if you like what you see, the gameplay is there... and then some. The gouraud shaded, texture mapped and extremely well lit environments that lay



USE TELESCOPES TO SCOPE OUT ROCKET PIECES.



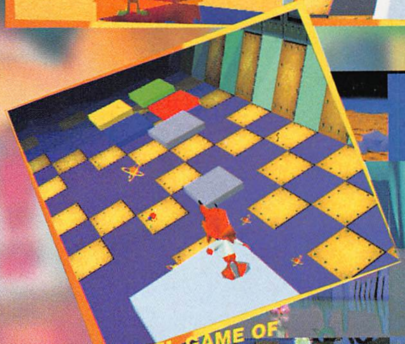


















THIS MID-LEVEL GAME OF 'SIMON' LEADS TO A ROCKET PIECE!



before you are filled with secrets galore, and truck loads of floating platforms. The goal in each is to find two rocket pieces and of course, stay alive. Each level is littered with well hidden switches and puzzles which activate numerous devices, and a hair-raising assortment of woolies and other peculiar creatures. Bubsy does away with such vermin with either a carefully executed head drop or by grabbing, aiming, and shooting electrons, provided one's available. From deep oceans to perilous peaks and haunted hallways, each level provides a new and unique challenge.

The music, besides a grinding scratch which inhibits a few tunes, matches the action perfectly and brings a whimsical tone to the on-screen frolic.

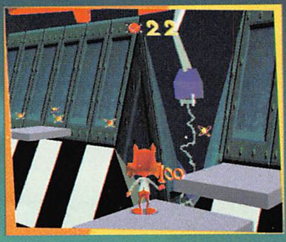
The bottom line? *Bubsy 3D* weighs in as a slightly peculiar, vastly unique, and very addicting 3D adventure that I found not only highly addicting but quite refreshing. A "me too" game this isn't. A sequel-worthy 3D adventure this is. ***ES***







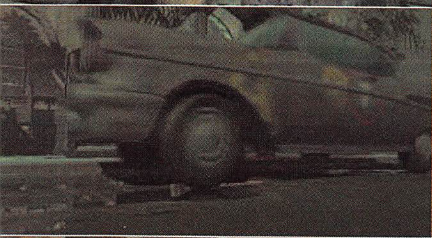


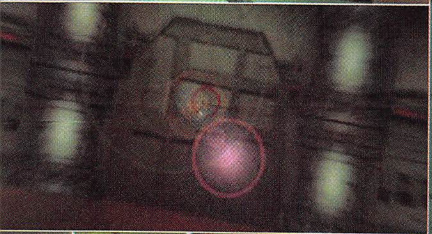
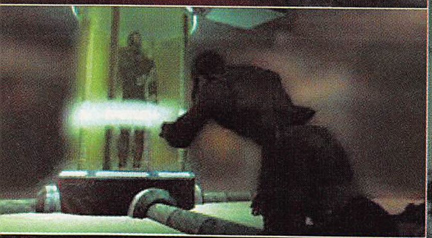
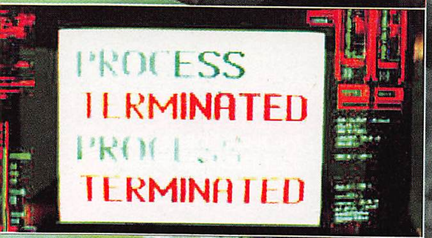




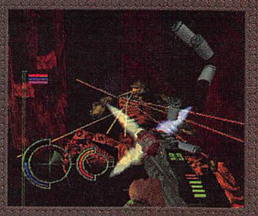
PSYGNOSIS ARE PLAYING **MIND GAMES**... STRAP ON YOUR **COMBAT GEAR**...
CHARGE-UP YOUR **FIREPOWER**... IT'S TIME FOR **YOUR** FIRST AND LAST **OPERATION**... **CODENAME:**

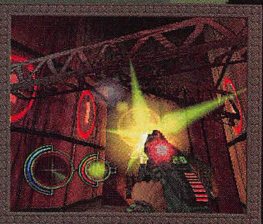
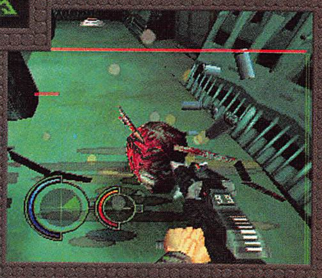
TENKA



Yep, yet another 3D stompathon, and another recall for Gunner Hambleton as I take another jog around the newest PlayStation corridor game and rip apart any hideous mutations waiting in the dark. I'm always ready for more gunning carnage (with a side order of puzzle elements), and I'd been following the progress of the Psygnosis effort, Codename Tenka, for over a year. Now that I've recovered from the insanities present in the stupendous piece of software, I'm ready and able to furnish you with details on why this could be the finest PlayStation 3D corridor action title ever seen...

From the moment that weird spinning owl pendant appears, you know you're guaranteed that Psygnosis quality, and the excellence continues unabated here. First of all, you're greeted with perhaps the scariest intro ever seen (apart from the Toshinden 2 intro, but that was scary for all the wrong reasons), with super high-quality CG depicting strange brain-frying from inside your character's head! Impressive isn't the word here; as real smoke effects combine with day-glo freakishness not seen since the flashback scenes of Millennium and the dramatic end of 2001: A Space Odyssey.

After a short recovery period, and a spot of plot explanation (which I'll save for the review) I began the game itself, and was greeted with a usual 3D

VOICES IN MY HEAD MAKE ME WANT TO SCREAM... IMAGES... FLASHBACKS... SIGHTS AND SOUNDS THAT DON'T BELONG...
WHAT SHOULD I DO? WHAT CAN I DO? I KNOW... I HAVE THIS **BIG POINTY GUN** SO I'LL KILL EVERYTHING... **COOL!**



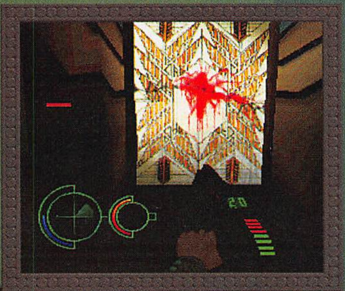


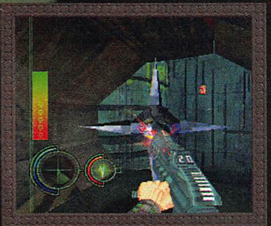
maze to explore. Look up, down, sidestep and crouch your way through this game, looking for ways to open doors and collecting ammunition and power-ups. Hey, this ain't the most original of premises, but for the masses of folks who can't get enough 3D action, this promises and delivers exactly what you desire: an atmospheric run around a superbly detailed environment. And then, I found the gun.

Your gun. Very big and shiny. Mmmm. I like it. It sways from side to side when you move, and tears apart frothing abominations with bloody ease. However, this gun is very special. You never change it. You simply add (for example) missile capabilities later into the game, which click onto your weapon and grind with the sound of mechanical parts. Personally, I prefer a dozen different weapons to play with, but the effects some add-ons to this gun have made me overlook this point... for now.

What is present in abundance is a brilliant 'pumping' soundtrack throughout your excursion; it's as if you've plugged into Thrash Techno FM throughout the whole mission: This ain't atmospheric wailing, just throbbing dance tunes that add a real frenetic sense of purpose to your explo-

THIS IS **YOUR GUN**... AIM IT AT THE **ENEMY**... PULL THE **TRIGGER**...
BUT NOT BEFORE THEY **SCREAM** AND BEG LIKE **STINKIN' PEEGS!**





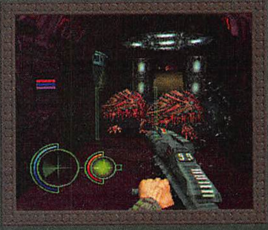



rations; an addition I can't wait for in the final version.

Other exciting improvements to the genre (apart from a lack of loading and seamless streaming between levels) make use of the PlayStation's new game libraries; meaning a real lack of pixelation when you're scraping up against a wall and some really cool lighting effects. Those requiring fantastic lens-flare eruptions when you build up a laser strike and fire it into a lump of quivering enemy flesh should be more than happy. Add to this some great pulse-lightning (red for danger, green for sewer exploration), mist, fire and targeting effects and you're some way to realizing what Psygnosis has unlocked in the Sony console. There's even a laser sight for your weapon!

This wouldn't be a Hambleton preview without some mention of the monsters you'll be facing. You'll notice from the screenshots that all those mutations are 3D polygons; no pixelated 2D sprites here! This means that you can creep behind your foe and they'll be facing away from you (the first for a PlayStation game of this nature). Not only this, but there an assembled cast of texture-mapped critters to face, from the usual floating robot baddies, walking spider heads (think: The Thing), amazing robotic humans which light the walls with their minigun fire, agile golden robots and even what look like walking bloated toadstools with hideous growling faces! There's a real sense of insanity present where you creep into a chamber and find yourself being attacked by a trio of yapping alien fungi heads on legs! Full marks to the Codename Tenka crew; your monsters are absolutely insane!

Currently boasting almost 40 levels of constant action, and with more options than you thought possible (including the infamous Psygnosis Widescreen mode), this is set to become yet another must-have Psygnosis title, and a marvelous addition to the genre. Find out if Psygnosis has created the perfect 3D corridor exploration (and I'm hoping for that all important two-player option) when the final version lands in our laps. Until then, feast your eyes on the carnage I've already endured! CH



THE VOICES HAVE STOPPED... NO MORE WORDS TO WRITE... NO MORE PICTURES... MORE COVERAGE ON CODENAME: TENKA VERY SOON...





P PREVIEW | PlayStation

DEVELOPER - PSYGNOSIS	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - PSYGNOSIS	DIFFICULTY - CHALLENGING
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - MARCH '97



CHIEF HAMBLETON
ROTTING HUMAN HEADS ON LEGS? THAT'S FOR ME!






TUNNEL B1

When I first saw an early alpha of *Tunnel B1* (about four months ago) I thought I was looking at a rendered intro. No joke. The graphics really are that good. While I was playing the game for review in the GameFan office, spectator comments ranged from "Is that a new N64 game?" to "Those backgrounds MUST be CD sourced." In fact, *Tunnel B1* is one of the few games where I can honestly say that the in-game graphics are better than the rendered intro! The frame rate is high (it must be 60fps), the texture-mapped polygon objects are incredibly detailed, and best of all, the light sourcing is from heaven.



Now I don't normally make statements like this, but the lighting effects and pyrotechnics in *Tunnel B1* really are the best I've ever seen on any system. The B1's machine gun fire convincingly lights up the surrounding area; flares arc through the air leaving a trail of red luminescent smoke; colored street lights create realistic lens flare; mini-nukes send out transparent plasma shock waves through the air – this is the real deal, folks. Even a simple crate explodes in a mixture of light-sourced flames and smoke trailing polygon debris. You can get a sense of the game's graphical splendor from the screen shots adorning this spread, but what you can't see is how well it moves. I guarantee you've NEVER seen anything like it.



Tunnel B1 is no slouch in the aural department either. The jaw-dropping visuals are accompanied by a pounding orchestral soundtrack that wouldn't seem out of place in the latest Stallone flick. It's a sign of the times when a videogame features a better musical score than most Hollywood movies can offer. The effects are good too – suitably chunky and metallic – with bassy explosions and convincing reverberation when your skimmer enters a tunnel. But as a fellow knight of the realm once told me, "Graphics and sound do not a good game make."

Tunnel B1's gameplay has a lot in common with Core's *Machinehead*. Both games are first person perspective shooters with one viewpoint, both games have an unlimited rapid fire machine gun as the basic weapon, and most importantly, both games feature the inertia and control of a ground-based vehicle.

THE COUNTDOWN HAS BEGUN! DESTROY ALL ENEMY TARGETS!








However, *Machinehead*'s vehicle momentum was secondary to the blasting action; *Tunnel B1* places a much greater emphasis on the driving side of things, coming across as more '*Ridge Racer* with guns' than '*Doom* in a vehicle.' It's a strange hybrid and one which isn't entirely successful.

First, what's with the viewpoint? It's like you're attached to the B1's bumper looking up! Why would I want to be looking at the sky the whole time when nearly everything is on the ground? You do get used to it, but the first time you play the game I guarantee you'll get neck crick from straining to compensate! An alternative viewpoint would have been appreciated.

Second, the B1 craft itself is awkward to control. It accelerates and steers as a vehicle, yet can strafe and stop dead like a typical *Doom* style character. The two do not go well together.






DESTROY EVERYTHING! ROADSIDE OBJECTS CONCEAL HIDDEN ARMAMENTS AND FUEL!






Third, the game is poorly structured. On the one hand, there are too many obstacles and enemies to let you get up to a decent speed (so the game never makes the most of the driving aspect) while on the other hand the tricky control system just doesn't work as a first person shooter (so the game never makes the most of the *Doom* aspect). *Tunnel B1*'s play fields are either narrow streets or tunnels, both of which make maneuvering in a combat situation a decidedly tricky affair. There's enough health to balance this out, but I would've rather a little more skill were needed to progress.



Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the action is extremely repetitive. This is a fault of all first person shooters, but in *Tunnel B1*'s case it's particularly acute. In Neon's defense, they have attempted to spice things up with different mission objectives and restrictive time limits, but it's the game mechanics that are at fault. You drive, you shoot, you get hit, you collect energy, you drive some more... ad infinitum.



That all sounds pretty negative doesn't it? Don't get me wrong, *Tunnel B1* isn't a terrible game by any stretch of the imagination. It's just that it's not as good as it looks. It seems to me that Neon created this incredible game engine and then tried to make a game fit around it – not the best recipe for success. Still, I enjoyed *Tunnel B1*, and die hard fans of the genre may be able to look past its shortcomings and enjoy it too, but I can't help feeling that anyone expecting the game to play as good as it looks is going to be a tad disappointed. *K*

R REVIEW

PlayStation

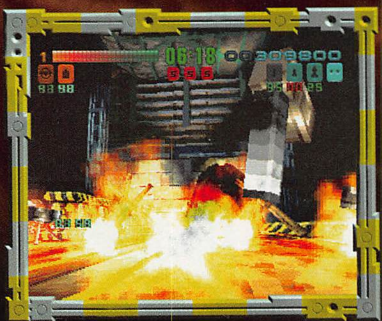
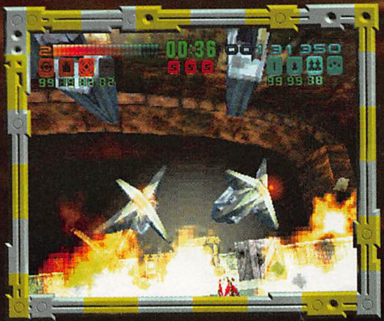
- DEVELOPER - OCEAN
- PUBLISHER - ACCLAIM
- FORMAT - CD
- # OF PLAYERS - 1
- DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED
- AVAILABLE - NOW



KNIGHTMARE If looks could kill...





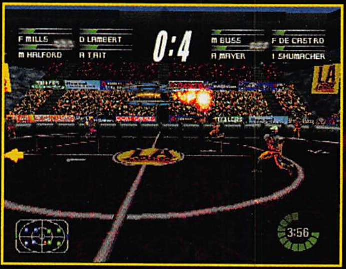



LEAGUE OF PAIN

Another cool game courtesy of Psygnosis. While at first glance *LOP* seems to be a *Pitball* clone, the gameplay and graphics are lookin' incredibly top-notch. The rinks are huge, with awesome texture-mapping, wicked reflections, and stunning light-sourcing and lens flares. The gameplay seems to be a little more refined than previous efforts in this genre, due to some truly solid control over attacking and scoring. Similar to *Pitball*, *Legion of Pain* can be played by up to four people, multi-tapped, so expect some major replayability. We'll continue our coverage next issue.







POWERSLAVE

Powerslave is coming to your PS, and in fine form indeed. This version employs true light-sourcing which, while not as dramatic as the Saturn version, packs much more realism. The frame rate is running slower on the PS at this point, but the textures are immeasurably smoother. Either way, considering the puzzles, cool weapons, and wicked enemies, this is still the best single player corridor game ever. Here's an interesting note: Our resident *Powerslave* pro observed that the level design in this version, at some points, is all new. He's also itchin' to take *Powerslave* apart in Megafan, so be sure check out our upcoming issue!








WARHAMMER: SHADOW OF THE HORNED RAT

Forget your lead miniatures, anorak, thick glasses and strange smell, because tabletop battles are coming to your PlayStation! *Warhammer: Shadow of the Horned Rat* is a cunning strategy title which is based on the Games Workshop masterpiece. So instead of locking yourself in a darkened room to paint some elves, you can take your band of mercenaries on an epic quest to save the Empire from encroaching Orc forces. Loads of tiny (but brilliantly animated) figures hacking each other into small pieces while you (as general) attempt to stop your team wandering into a nearby lake. Epic battles are at your fingertips!! I smite thee, Orc scum!









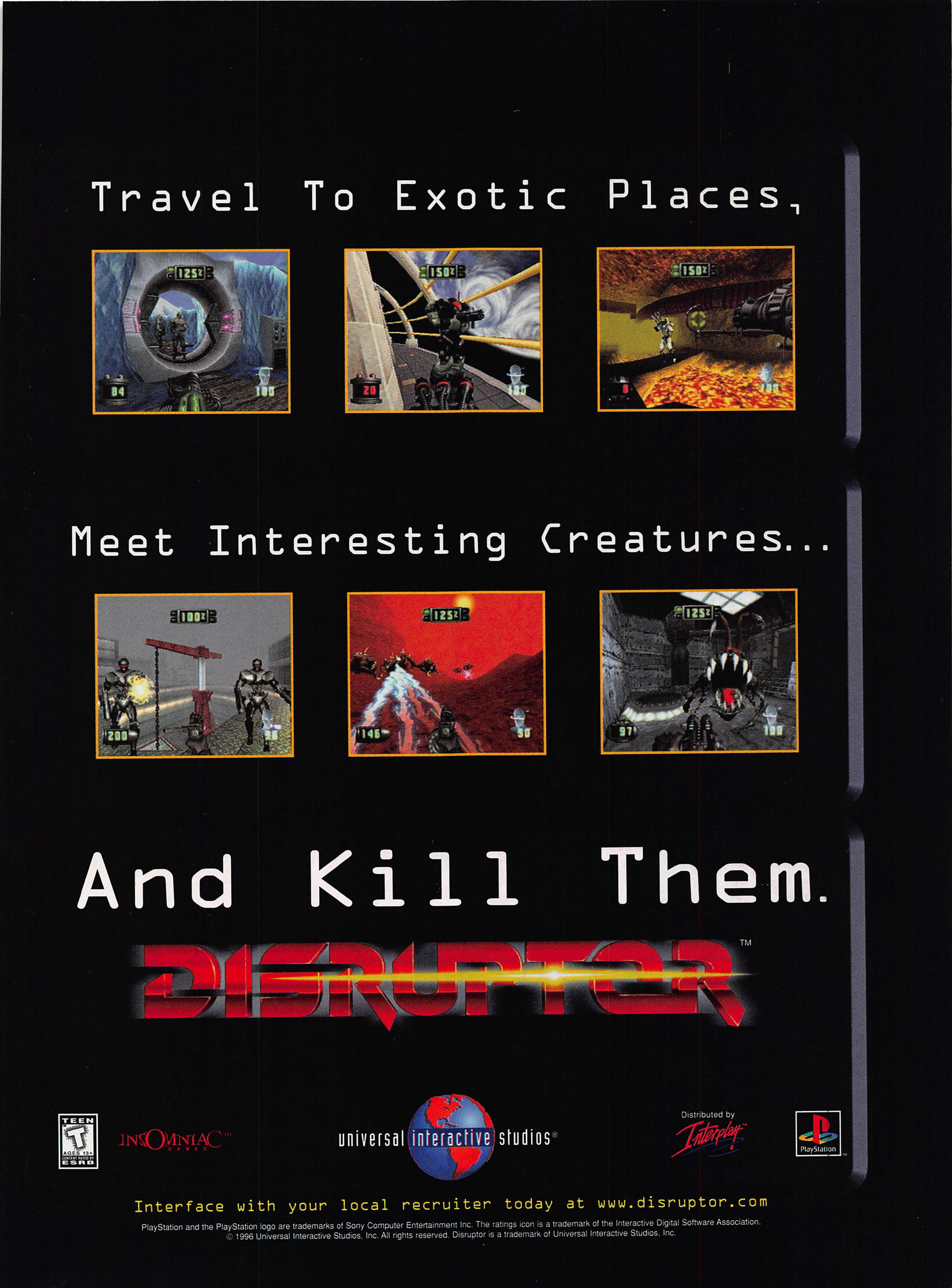



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Travel To Exotic Places,
Meet Interesting Creatures...
And Kill Them.
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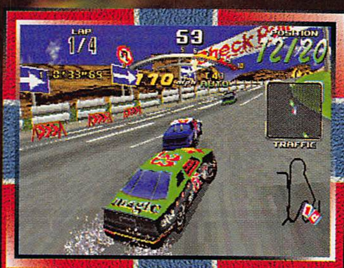
SATURN SECTOR

SEGA GIVES ITS FAVORITE SATURN RACING TITLE ANOTHER SPIN AROUND THE TRACK! BUT WAS IT WORTH IT?





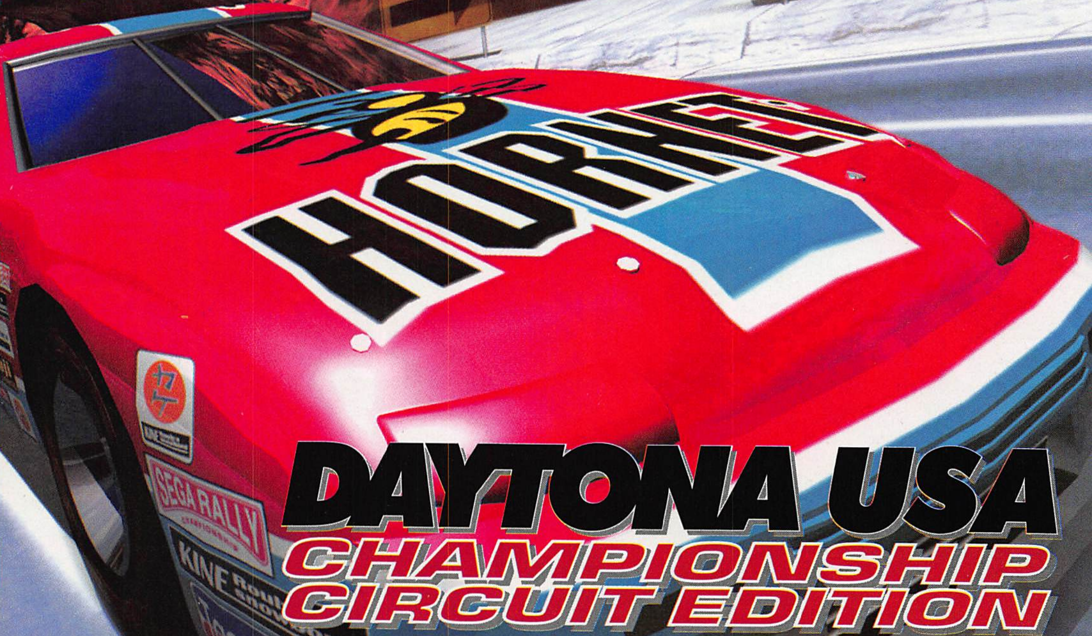






D*aytona USA* in the arcade is my favorite driving game of all time (especially eight player link-up), so like thousand of others I was really looking forward to the original Saturn conversion of *Daytona USA*. However, unlike thousands of others, I wasn't *that* disappointed when it finally came out. Obviously I was unhappy with the quality of the visuals (especially when compared with *Ridge Racer* on PS), but it still played just like the arcade, and that was the most important thing.

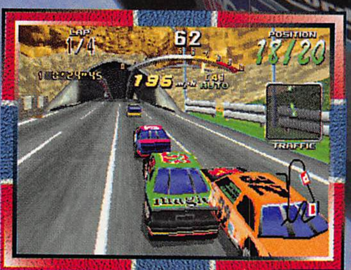
So you can imagine my joy when Sega announced that due to public demand they were putting the CS team (responsible for Saturn *Sega Rally*) on an all new *Daytona Remix* designed to take of advantage of the Saturn's latest graphics libraries *and* be compatible with the *NiGHTS* analog pad. Basically it was a dream come true for *Daytona* fans, and now that the finished American version is finally here, I feel it my duty to spread the word.





DAYTONA USA CHAMPIONSHIP CIRCUIT EDITION















Ok, first the bad news: The clipping is still very poor. It's nowhere near as obtrusive as the original *Daytona* conversion, but the pop-up is still noticeable. I know it's irritating, I know they were supposed to fix it, but when you have that many cars and that much trackside detail something has to give. If that's all you were looking for in an update, too bad. Run home and cry to mama. Other than that the graphics are everything we could have hoped for: faster, more detailed, higher res, full screen, and best of all – 30 frames per second.

The other bad news is that two of *Daytona CCE*'s music tracks really suck. The intro and replay music are both appalling soft rock tragedies (*Sons of Angels?*) that sound like certain SOA executives have had way too much input on the game's soundtrack. Thankfully, the in-game tunes are much better and range from cool dance re-mixes of the original cheesy *Daytona* tunes (hey, I *liked* those tunes) to '70's funk to hardcore drum and bass. The sound effects and speech are also spot on.

Daytona CCE is more than just an aesthetic update. There's so many new options and features I don't know where to start! Well, how about the two new tracks: National Park Speedway and Desert Highway. National Park Speedway is (as you'd expect) a leafy green expanse with a wide road and pastoral trackside objects, including a Ferris Wheel and roller coaster (complete with a moving cart). Desert City, on the other hand, is a narrow track, winding through a sun-scorched desert mountain range. Both are intermediate tracks with their own set of 'nasty' turns to negotiate, and both fit right in alongside the three existing *Daytona* tracks.

On top of more tracks, *Daytona* also offers a choice of nine new vehicles, each with their own different handling, grip and speed characteristics. Certain cars are better for certain tracks, though when you uncover the original *Daytona* car (hidden) you'll pretty much want to stick with that.



One feature sorely lacking from the original *Daytona* was a split screen two player mode, and once again that's a situation that's been rectified for *Daytona CCE* (though the clipping is even worse in two player mode). You also get a cool *Super Mario Kart*-style Ghost Mode for your money, and more timekeeping options than you could possibly need.

Clipping problems aside, *Daytona CCE* is a brilliant driving game. It offers a different kind of racing action from any other driving sim: fast, realistic and rough. With 39 other cars on the first track you're not just racing against the clock, you're constantly jostling with other vehicles to stay on the road. The cornering and power sliding is perfect – not as fun as *Ridge Racer* but far more realistic – while the sense of speed generated from the 'on the hood' camera is unsurpassed. 210 miles per hour? No problem!

Daytona CCE is an excellent racer. It's just a shame that most people won't get past the pop-up. Face facts: this is not a game to impress your friends with, this is a game to take home, play and cherish. I think you'll be glad you did. *K*







DID THE COIN-OP HAVE ALL OF THESE?!! DID IT? EH! EH!
CUSTOMIZING THE GAME IS PAR FOR THE COURSE THESE DAYS. TWEAK AND TWIDDLE THOSE SETTINGS!



REVIEW

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - SOJ

PUBLISHER - SOA

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER



KNIGHTMARE
Look beyond the pop-up.



POLICE
Virtua Cop™ 2. Twice as lethal.
There's shooting. And then there's slaughter.
Virtua Cop™ 2 is faster, deeper, more challenging, and more fatally engaging than its predecessor.
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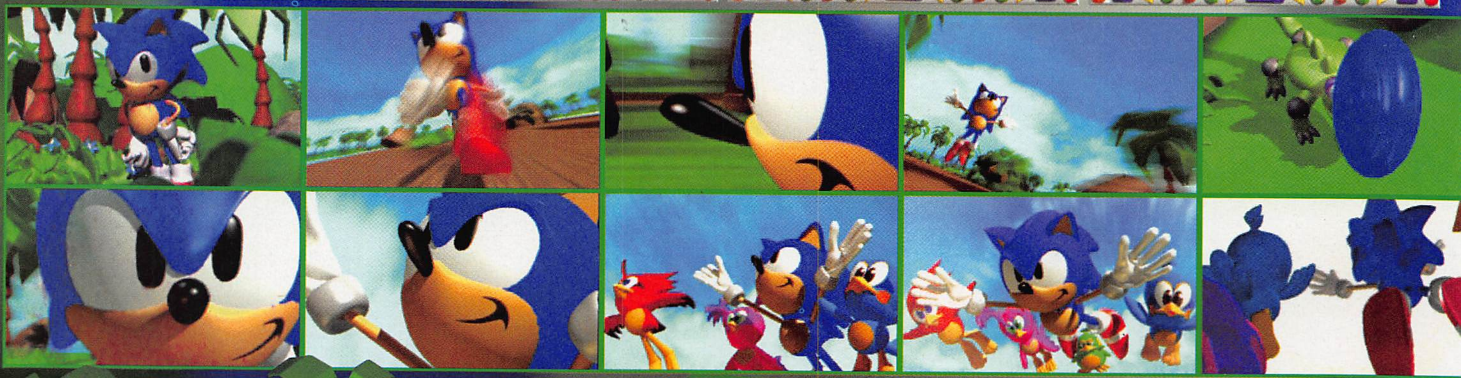

Guns don't kill robots.
Cyber Troopers with napalm bombs kill robots.
Kill On The Fly
Ten Post-Modern Arenas
Furious 2-Player Mode
Full 360° Motion
You've got a battalion of cyborg centurions. They've got an arsenal of death-dealing weapons. They're on a rampage, hell-bent on your annihilation. And they prefer to kill at close range, with a certain in-your-face intimacy. It's warp-speed 3D mechanized combat at its absolute ugliest. And Sega Saturn's multiple processors give it all the adrenaline-pumping, gut-wrenching action of the arcade version.
VIRTUAL ON™
CYBER TROOPERS
Only On
SEGA SATURN™
www.sega.com
KIDS TO ADULTS
K-A
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
1 OR 2 PLAYERS
SEGA SATURN EXCLUSIVE
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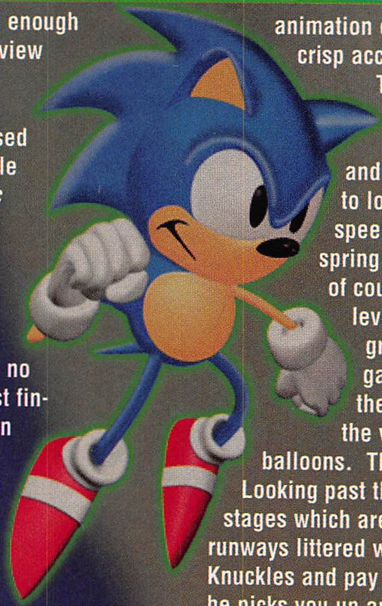






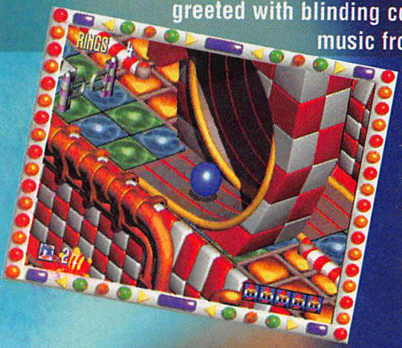






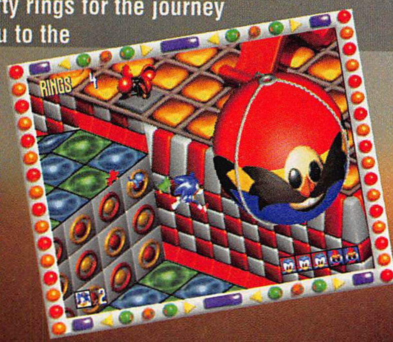
If you were kind enough to read my preview last issue you surely felt my early skepticism based on our previewable version of *Sonic 3D Blast*. That was only three short weeks ago (as I'm writing this) and at that time the game had no music, zero background animation, no 3D levels, and a whole lot less texture than the game I just finished playing. Not to mention the intro. Never have I seen a game come so far in such a short time, but alas, *Sonic 3D Blast* has. And while this still isn't the next generation *Sonic* I continue to long for, it is one of the best isometric actioners I have ever played. From the outset you're greeted with blinding color, TM *Sonic* music from above, hot animation on both the characters and environments and crisp accurate gameplay with perfect collision. It's as if Travellers Tales crawled inside of Yuji Naka's head because this game screams traditional *Sonic* (traditional being the original 8-megger and the *import* Sonic CD). Everything you've come to love about *Sonic* is here. Great music, blazing speed (when applicable of course) 360 degree loops, spring loaded platforms, TM *Sonic* sound effects, and of course... Robotnik. What I didn't expect was the level of detail TT have achieved in the backgrounds. Trust me, these screens do not do the game justice. Literally everything that rests on the playing field is animated, from little workers in the walls to spinning radars and rendered Robotnik balloons. The graphics in *Blast* are truly a spectacle.

Looking past the main game itself and into the Chaos Emerald stages which are entirely 3D, you'll find smooth 30fps looping runways littered with rings and obstacles. Once you find Knuckles and pay him the fifty rings for the journey he picks you up and flies you to the









REVIEW

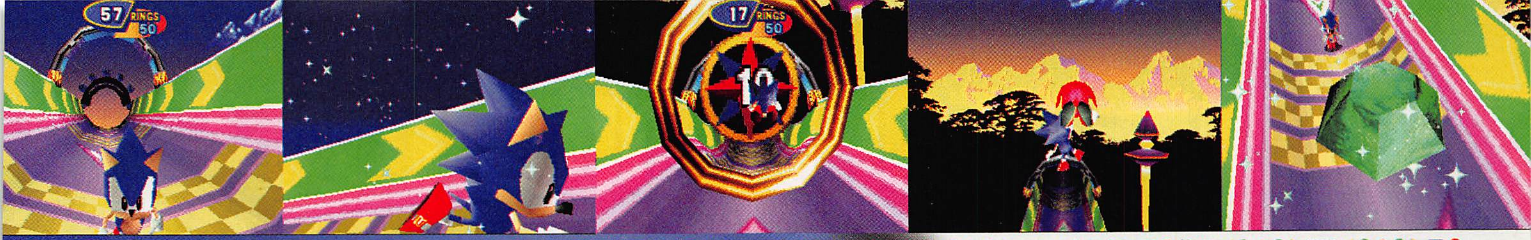
SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER -TRAVELLERS TL.	# OF PLAYERS -1
PUBLISHER - SEGA	DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
FORMAT -CD	AVAILABLE - NOW



E. STORM
THE 1ST IN WHAT WILL HOPEFULLY BE A LONG LINE OF 32-BIT SONIC GAMES.













Find Knuckles and race for the Chaos Emerald or Tails for an extra life – in the 3D Zone! 50 rings buys a ticket!

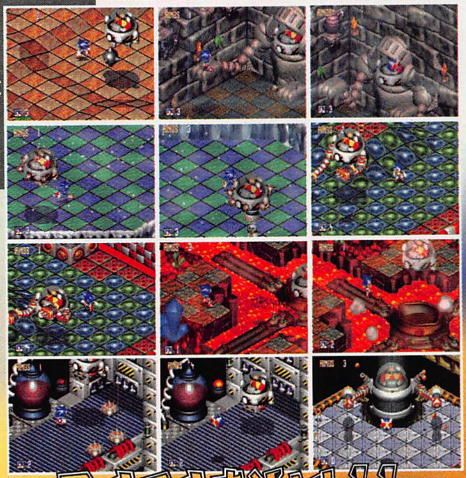




course. One can only view these and pray that *Sonic Extreme* lives up to our expectations. I'm truly astonished at how successfully TT has been able to translate *Sonic* into an isometric world.

For a game with far from revolutionary gameplay to hold my interest as this one did is a pretty tall order. In fact, I can honestly say that if this one didn't say Travellers Tales on the box, I'd have sworn it came from the master himself.

So, while *Sonic* fans wait earnestly for the first 3D polygonal *Sonic*, there is now a game to tide them over and bring back that *Sonic* feeling that we all love so much. ***ES***



ROBOTNIK!!

THE FAT MAN'S BACK WITH A WHOLE QUIVER OF CLEVER KILLING MACHINES!











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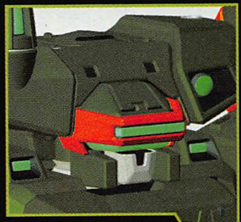
AVKGF

EIGHT FUTURISTIC CYBER-TROOPERS ARE READY TO FIGHT! WHO WILL YOU SELECT? HOW CAN YOU HOPE TO WIN?

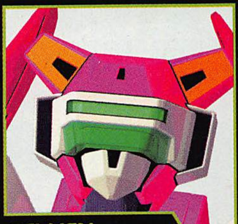


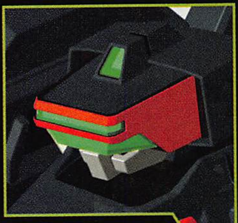

APHARMD

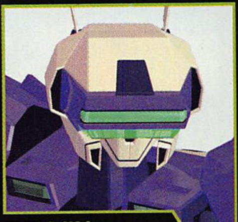

BAL-BAS-BOW


BELGDOR


DORKAS


FEI-YEN

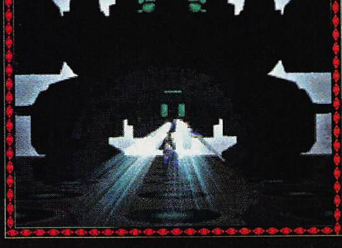

RAIDEN


TEMJIN


VIPER II

THE UNKNOWN ENEMY MUST BE DESTROYED!

SEGA RELEASES ANOTHER ARCADE MONSTER IN THE HOME!



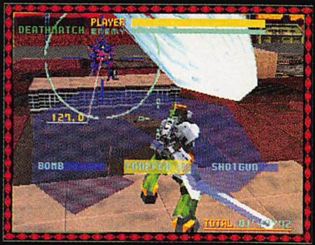
If you've been to any large arcades recently, chances are you'll have seen the Virtual On machine. It's an eye catching two seater with duel joystick control and sometimes a tinted glass partition between the two screens. The flashy cabinet gives Virtual On the appearance of a novelty 'one go' coin-op, but as anyone who's invested any time in the machine will tell you, nothing could be further from the truth.

Virtual On is a one-on-one 3D combat game set in the 31st century. Its origins date back as far as Tank on the Atari 2600, but more recently the genre received a

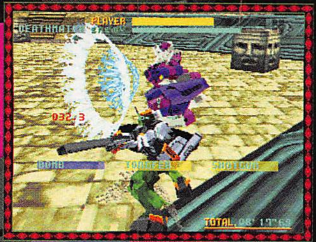


INCREDIBLE! ANOTHER STUNNING SEGA COIN-OP IS CONVERTED TO THE SATURN! GET READY TO RUMBLE!

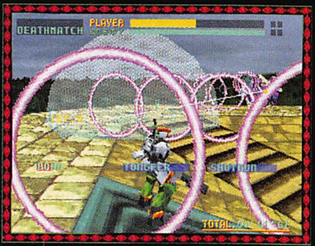
3D KICK START FROM NAMCO'S CYBERSLED. THE PREMISE IS SIMPLE: SELECT ONE OF EIGHT MECHS, THEN ENTER INTO AN ARENA TO DO BATTLE WITH YOUR OPPONENT (THERE ARE ALSO TWO BOSSES). EACH CYBER TROOPER HAS ITS OWN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESS, WITH INDIVIDUAL WEAPONS AND VARYING PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS. THE MECHS



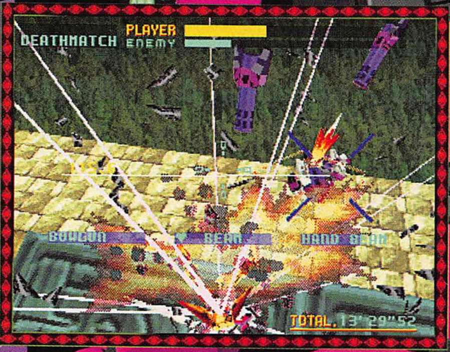




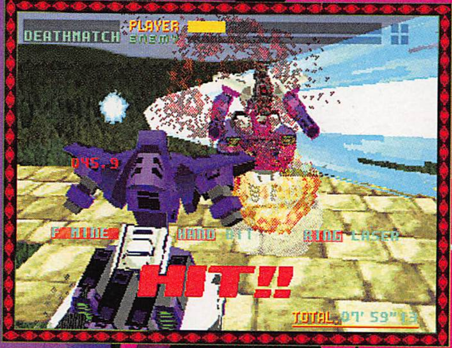




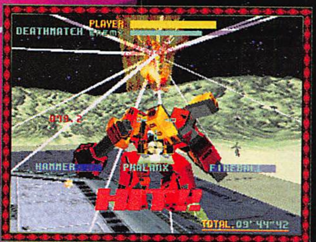
ARE ALL EVENLY BALANCED IN TERMS OF SPEED AND POWER, AND IT'S UP TO YOU TO MAKE USE OF BOTH SUPERIOR TACTICS AND REFLEXES TO OVERCOME YOUR FOE. THAT AND VERY BIG GUNS.



CONTROL - IN THE ARCADE VIRTUAL ON IS PLAYED USING A DUEL JOYSTICK SYSTEM SIMILAR TO CYBERSLED. BOTH JOYSTICKS ARE USED TO CONTROL THE MOVEMENT OF YOUR MECH, WITH A FIRE BUTTON ON EACH STICK. AT FIRST I WAS A LITTLE WORRIED ABOUT HOW THIS SYSTEM WOULD TRANSLATE TO THE SATURN JOYPADS, BUT THANKFULLY, MY WORRIES HAVE PROVED GROUNDLESS. THE DEFAULT SATURN JOYPAD CONFIGURATION WORKS MUCH BETTER THAN EXPECTED, AND IF YOU'RE PREPARED TO PAY THE PRICE YOU CAN ALWAYS GET AHOLD OF THE SPECIALLY MADE VIRTUAL ON DUEL JOYSTICK ARCADE PAD. THIS REPLICATES THE ARCADE CONTROL SYSTEM EXACTLY, AND WILL MORE THAN SATISFY ANY VIRTUAL ON FANS WHO CRAVE ARCADE PERFECTION.



TWO PLAYER ACTION - THE OTHER BIG QUESTION HANGING OVER THE SATURN VERSION OF VIRTUAL ON WAS: HOW WOULD AM3 HANDLE THE MULTIPLAYER ASPECT OF THE GAME? WELL, I'M HAPPY TO REPORT THAT VIRTUAL ON FEATURES ONE OF THE BEST SPLIT SCREEN TWO PLAYER MODES I'VE EVER ENCOUNTERED. YOU GET THE OPTION OF HAVING THE SCREEN SPLIT HORIZONTALLY OR VERTICALLY (I GO FOR VERTICAL EVERY TIME), BUT WHICHEVER WAY YOU CHOOSE THERE IS NO PERFORMANCE DEGRADATION WHATSOEVER!!! SOME OF THE ARENAS HAVE BEEN SLIGHTLY TAILORED TO FIT THE SPLIT SCREEN FORMAT, BUT OTHER THAN THAT YOU WON'T FIND A BETTER TWO PLAYER MODE THIS SIDE OF SEGA RALLY. BEST OF ALL THOUGH, A NET LINK VERSION IS ALSO IN THE PIPELINE.





GAMEPLAY - WHEN I FIRST PLAYED VIRTUAL ON IT SEEMED A BIT, WELL, SHALLOW. TWO GIANT ROBOTS RUNNING AROUND AN ARENA SHOOTING AT EACH OTHER - HOW MUCH DEPTH COULD THERE BE? WELL, AS ANY DECENT VIRTUAL ON PLAYER WILL TELL YOU - QUITE A BIT. PUT A NOVICE PLAYER UP AGAINST AN EXPERT, AND YOU'LL SEE WHAT I MEAN.

AS WITH ANY FIGHTING GAME, EACH MECH UTILIZES A DIFFERENT FIGHTING STYLE THAT TAKES TIME TO MASTER. SOME ARE SLOW AND

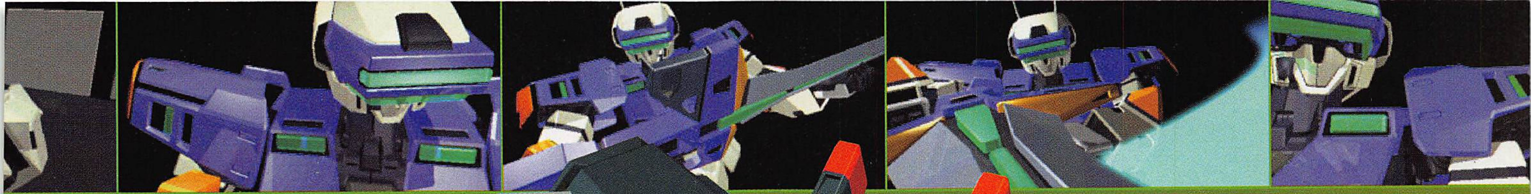


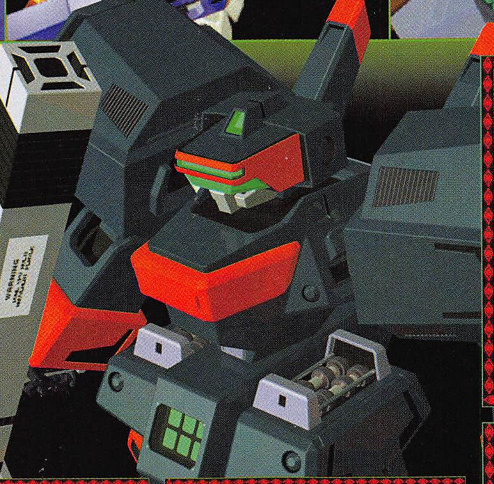




NEW INTRO CG AND IN-GAME OPTIONS MAKE THE SATURN VERSION BETTER THAN THE ORIGINAL!

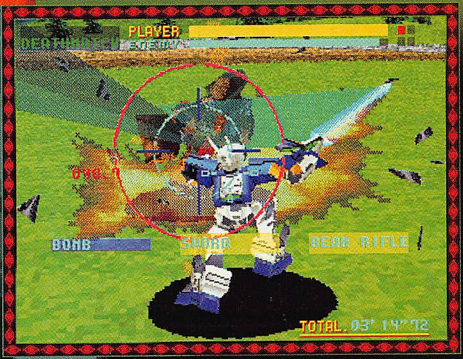




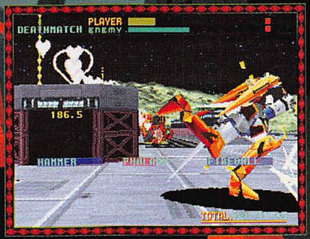


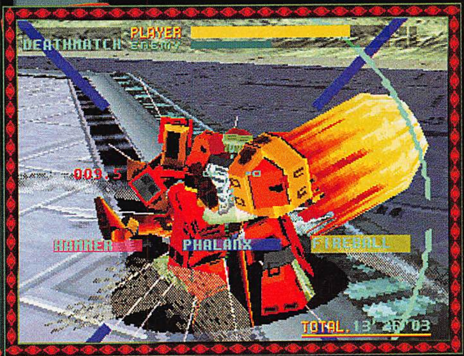
heavily armored (Belgdor, Raiden), some are fast and weak (Fei-Yen, Temjin); some have a long range weapon compliment (Viper, Raiden) and some a close range (Apharmd). Every move and weapon is balanced in terms of power and recovery, and techniques like jumping, blocking, dashing and close combat all need to be perfected before they can be used effectively.

The different arenas also add an extra element of strategy to the battles, and give certain cyber troopers the home field advantage. For instance, a slow character like Dorkas performs well in an arena with plenty of cover (his special attack can blast through buildings), but poorly in an open arena. This adds a cool unpredictable element to the Vs combat, as with random arenas on you never know where you're going to fight.



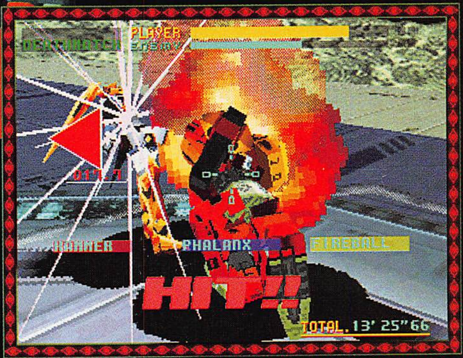






CONVERSION - After I saw an early beta of Virtual On I was worried that the Saturn just wouldn't be able to handle the power of the Model 2 coin-op, but it's come a long way since then. A very long way. The graphics may look a bit rough in still shots, but wait till you see this baby moving. AM3 have performed miracles replicating the coin-op's explosive visuals, without cutting any corners. All of the lighting effects, transparencies (the big ugly meshes in the beta have been improved beyond recognition), tracer effects, parallax backdrops and pyrotechnics of the coin-op have made it to the Saturn intact, with a high frame rate and virtually no glitching. You won't believe this is Saturn. The rockin' B-Univ tunes and stylish sound effects are also spot on.

Of course, the most amazing aesthetics in the world wouldn't be worth squat if the gameplay wasn't up to scratch, but thankfully Sega has once again delivered arcade perfection (especially with the Virtual On stick). What's more, in the tradition of Fighting Vipers, Sega has also included some extra features exclusive to the Saturn version, including a comprehensive options screen, a ranking mode and best of all, a number of hidden characters. We've already found Jaguarandi (a mid-boss behemoth), but there's talk of more.

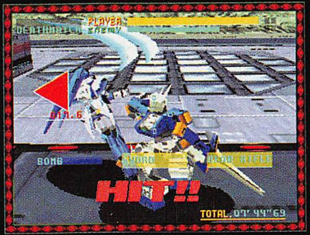


VERDICT - Virtual On is a truly revolutionary piece of software. I suppose the best way to describe it would be a cross between Gun Griffon and Doom deathmatch, but with all the competitiveness of a 2D beat-'em-up. Not only am I impressed with the quality of the conversion (the best since VF2), but I'm impressed with the quality of the game. Virtual On caught me completely by surprise. It's been a long time since I've played such a well thought out, balanced and unique game as this. I'd say it's an essential purchase for all Saturn owners, and a severe kick in the ass for Nintendo and Sony. K









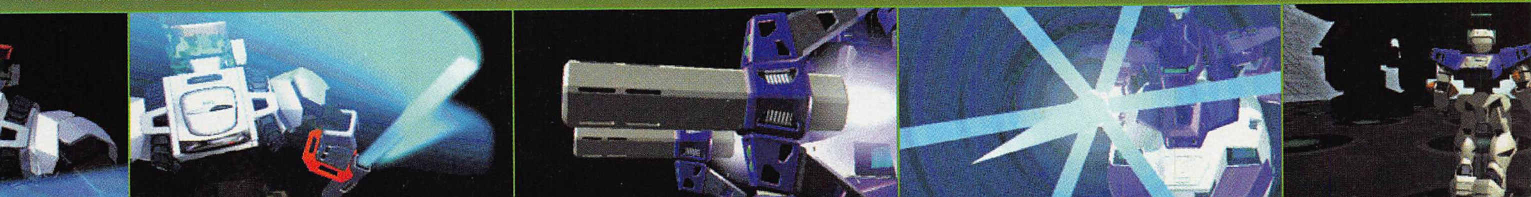
R REVIEW

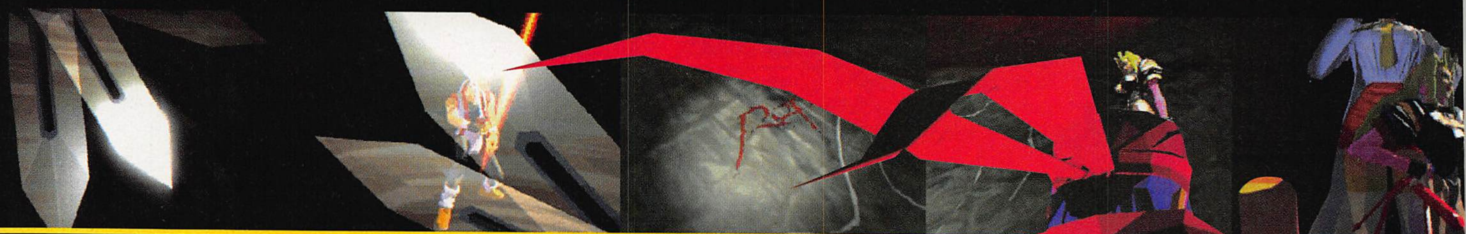
SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - SEGA	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - SEGA	DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW



KNIGHTMARE
VIRTUALLY PERFECT















No one can deny that the first *Toshinden* was greeted by gasps of amazement the world over. This paved the way for the PlayStation and was the first sign of the power afforded by the then new 32-bit systems. We gasped at Gaia's stage (that infamous stereogram doughnut), we laughed at Sofia's appalling soundtrack and generally forgave the shortcomings of the game because we were blown away by those pretty and colorful polygon graphics. But then, the inevitable happened; a PlayStation sequel (and that less-than-impressive *Toshinden Remix*) which didn't come close to improving the already flawed game mechanics. And now... as if previous abortive versions weren't enough... there's a 'special' Saturn version of this now plodding and elderly fighter; a stop-gap before Takara 'wow' us again with yet *another* PlayStation version (*Toshinden 3*!!). It was with grim determination that I began playing *Toshinden URA*...

I came away numbed. I'm not usually one to start twitching uncontrollably at the name of a bad game (except when the words '*Battle Monsters*' is uttered), but *Toshinden URA* is set to exacerbate this mental affliction. After a truly amateurish introduction (characters flickering around a black background to soft synth rock), the real pain began; my one player nightmare. I picked Eiji; the Ryu clone and a good all-rounder (I didn't realize just how good), and proceeded to plant fireball after fireball into every enemy I fought (lightly

TOSHINDEN 闘神伝 URA

R REVIEW

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - TAKARA	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - SEGA	DIFFICULTY - EASY
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER



CHIEF HAMBLETON IS THERE NO BEGINNING TO THIS GAME'S EXCITEMENT?

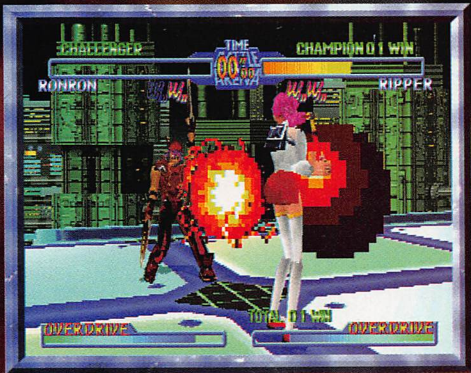




swiping at them when they ventured too close). A dozen fights later, I polished off Wolf (by coaxing him to the edge and watching as he charged off the arena) and viewed my end credits. Artificial intelligence? Not in this game, mate.



Afterwards, I decided to spare myself the agony of completing the game again to play as Sho and Vermilion, and ventured to the versus option. "So," I thought to myself, "perhaps this excels in two player mode?" If only. All those characters present in *Toshinden Remix* are back, mainly unchanged, along with Ripper and Ronron; the two newcomers. Ripper is best described as uneventful, whilst Ronron is laughably poor; a *Sailor Moon* lookalike with an appallingly animated gait and horribly pixelated attacks (she throws malted milk balls at you). The overall balance of characters is so poor that the only way you'll have a fair fight is to choose identical characters. Again, those highly unbalancing super moves are available at the touch of a button. This is definitely a beginner's beat-'em-up; those who've played any *Toshindens* before will see little new here.



Indeed, when you compare this lackluster effort to *Toshinden Remix*, you'll find nothing even remotely superior about this





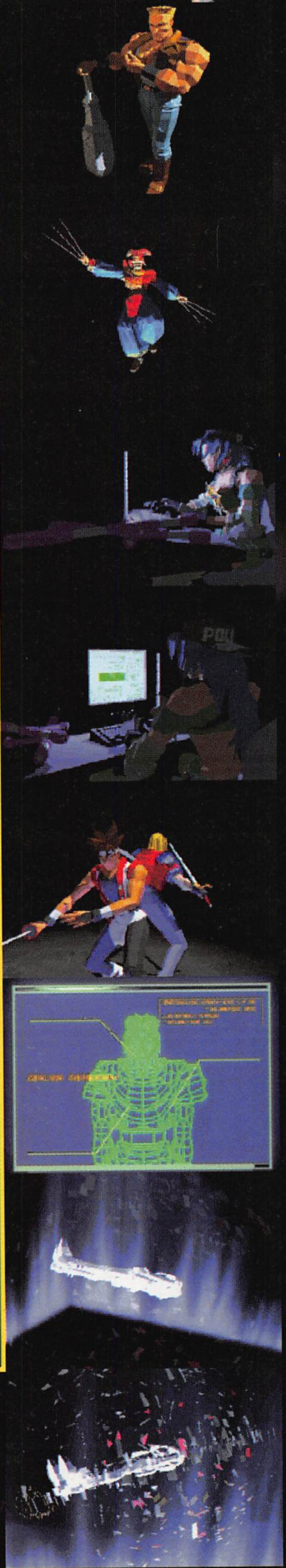


title. Remember those 3D backgrounds? Now they're 2D, lacking detail and completely nondescript. That much-touted 60 fps super-duper hi-res mode that only the Saturn could handle? More like a series of blocky polygons with some semblance of human form shambling about a blocky floor, executing those moves I've seen at least four times before. The actual texture maps on the characters themselves are on a par with *Toshinden* (y'know, that PlayStation game that came out *a year-and-a-half* ago), but the frame rate? Not even approaching the fluid joy of *Virtua Fighter 2*.



Amidst this swamp of effluent are a couple of minor good points; the character voices are clear, there's some average musical scores to tap your fingers to (mainly gleaned from previous PlayStation versions) and there's (wait for it) secret characters (admittedly, the robotic Sho and Vermilion are kinda cool) but even these plus points get lost in the mire of bad playability, poor front-ends (is that rotating floor on the title screen meant to be impressive?) and those huge character imbalances. The already imperfect *Toshinden Remix* is a lot better than this effort.

Overall? What a load of Tosh. ***CH***







Scud

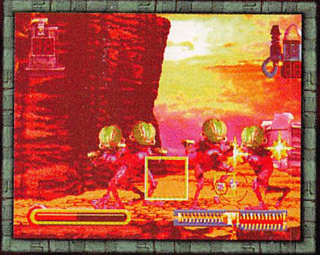
THE DISPOSABLE ASSASSIN™

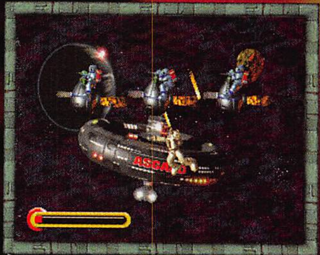


PREVIEW

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - SEGASOFT
PUBLISHER - SEGA
FORMAT - CD
OF PLAYERS - 1-2
DIFFICULTY - NA
AVAILABLE - FEBRUARY

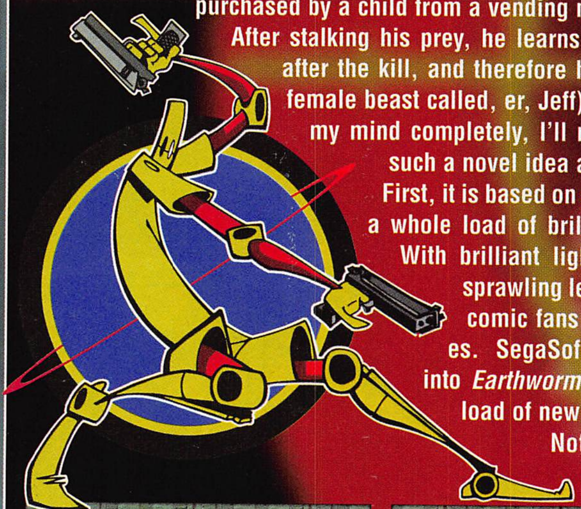






Surreal is the best way to describe SegaSoft's newest and weirdest video-game star; Scud. This cool banana-lookin' dude is actually the world's first disposable assassin, purchased by a child from a vending machine.

After stalking his prey, he learns that his termination awaits after the kill, and therefore hospitalizes his target (which incidentally, is a hideous female beast called, er, Jeff) who then recovers and seeks retribution. Before I lose my mind completely, I'll run through what makes this Saturn platformer/shooter such a novel idea and a graphical feast.

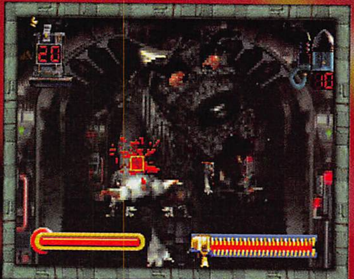


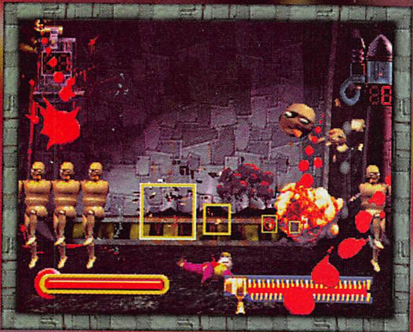
First, it is based on an underground comic character, and second, it features a whole load of brilliantly animated and incredibly weird-looking critters. With brilliant light-sourcing, numerous rendered characters and huge sprawling levels, this is one well thought-out game designed by real comic fans who crave exact silicon replicas of their pencil sketches. SegaSoft is set to send *Scud: The Disposable Assassin* straight into *Earthworm Jim* territory with a supremely crafted release with a load of new gameplay features...

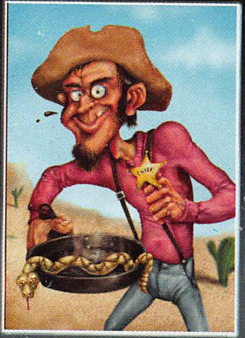
Not since the days of *Gunsmoke* on the NES have you been able to shoot and control your way through a video game, yet Scud allows just such possibilities thanks to a joypad and a stunner. What's even cooler is the way you can mix and match these play styles; joypad makes the game a platformer (with hordes of enemies constantly in your face), while the stunner version of the game is *Virtua Cop* on steroids. There's even the option of two players; Scud on the screen, and a fellow helper with a stunner. Of course, there's the option to enter joypad-based shooting if you haven't bought one of the 15 different guns you can acquire for Saturn gun games.

With the force of manic cartoonists behind them, SegaSoft is set to wow the gaming world with the coolest cartoon character of 1997. Find out if they've succeeded in a future issue... *CH*





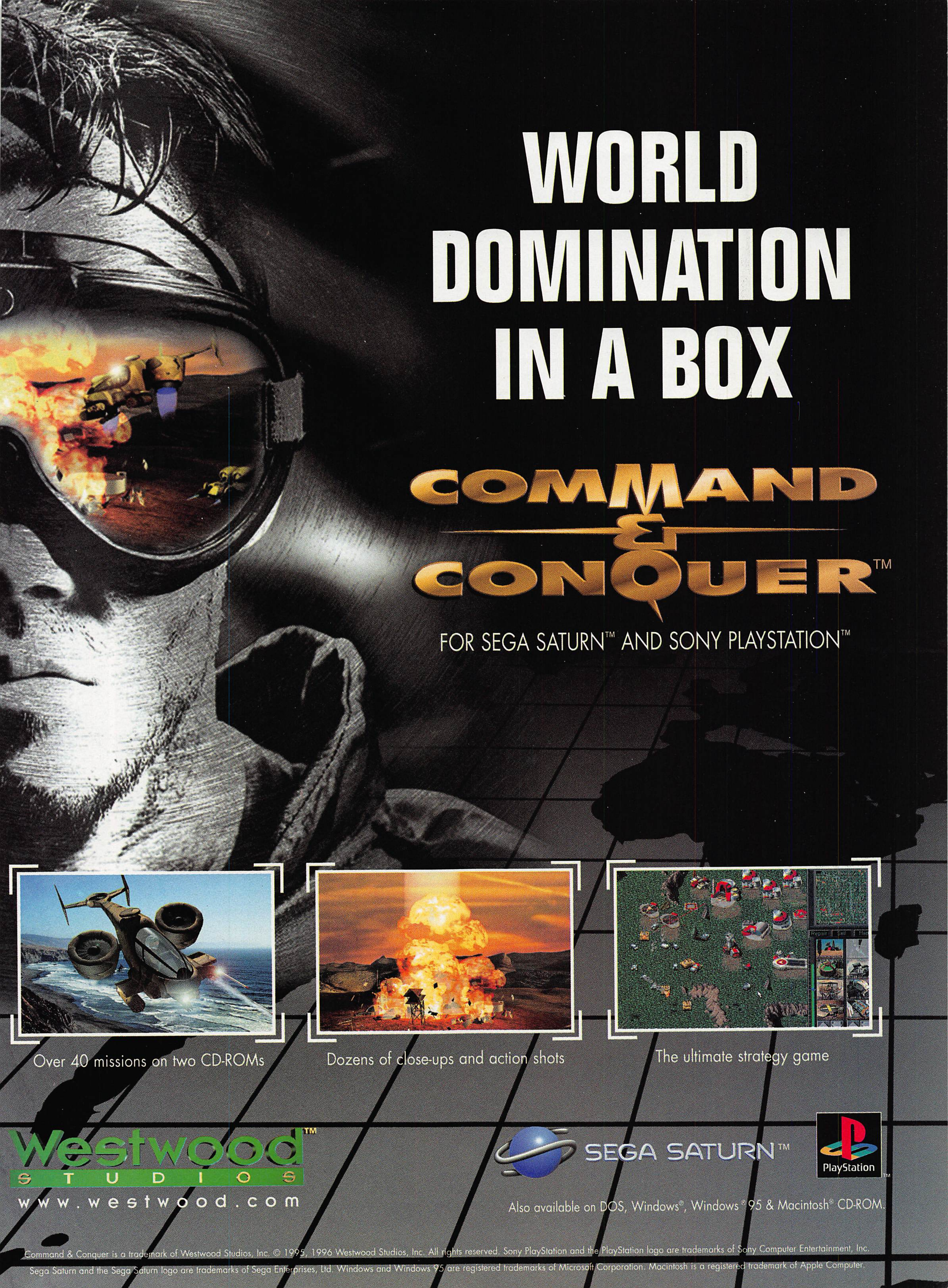




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Mr. Bones

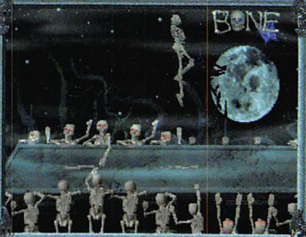
R REVIEW

SEGA SATURN

- DEVELOPER - ZONO
- PUBLISHER - SEGA
- FORMAT - CD
- # OF PLAYERS - 1
- DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
- AVAILABLE - NOW



KNIGHTMARE
DEM BONES, DEM BONES, DEM RENDERED BONES!


I must admit I had low expectations of Segasoft's *Mr. Bones*. The last thing the Saturn needs right now is another character platform game, especially when that 'character' is a goofy looking skeleton with a guitar. I mean, if you gotta do a character game, at least make sure the character is a cool one, right? *Sonic*? Cool! *Crash Bandicoot*? Bandicool! *Mario*? Er... kinda cool! But *Mr. Bones*?!? Uncool! Still, as a Knight and a nobleman it's my duty to give all games a fair and just appraisal, no matter how unappealing the main character may seem. Innocent till proven guilty, right? So it was with an open mind that I sat down to play *Mr.Bones* for the first time. Ten minutes later, I hated the game with a vengeance. Not a good start.

Ok. Before I go any further you should know that I actually like *Mr. Bones*. Believe it or not, this will end up being a positive review of the game. So why did I just waste the first paragraph bitching about how much I hated it at first? Because, fellow game fan, so will you. Apart from *Mr. Bones* being one of the most disgraceful looking videogame characters ever to afflict the Saturn, the tragic first 'running away' level really doesn't do the game any favors. Sure it looks good (as does the rest of *Mr. Bones*), but it's slow, unresponsive, pointless, repetitive, and bodes very badly for things to come.

If the whole game was based on the scrolling platform format of the first level, *Mr. Bones* would be







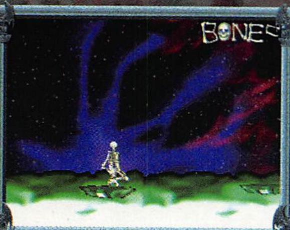


a very bad game indeed. But (*Hallelujah!*) the whole game is not based on the first level's format. In fact, the whole game is not based on ANY particular level's format. Each of *Mr. Bones'* 20+ levels features a different and unique game style – some good, some average – all with a consistent underlying control method and visual theme. Many games have attempted to integrate a variety of game styles into one product before, but to my mind none have ever managed it quite as successfully as *Mr. Bones*.



First, the level design demonstrates a refreshingly warped sense of imagination and innovation. Even though *Mr. Bones* has, at its heart, basic 2D platform game mechanics, it would be wrong to label *Mr. Bones* as a straightforward platformer. There are levels where you play a bizarre game of breakout on top of a giant skull, dangle from a flying dinosaur skeleton, swim through a CD sourced underwater cavern, navigate a swirling















Tempest 2000 style vortex, dodge rolling logs, play musical instruments, battle ghoulish shadows, save a Lilliputian race of dwarves from an army of spiders, and even (no kidding) tell jokes. And that's only scratching the surface. There's a whole treasure trove of weirdness just waiting to be discovered.

Second, the aesthetics are brilliant. Clearly a lot of time and money has been spent on the look of the game, and it shows. *Mr. Bones* makes extensive use of pre-rendered graphics and CD sourced backdrops, and while normally the two don't go well together, somehow it all works much better than expected. The animation and effects are exceptional, and the FMV sections are truly the best quality I've ever seen on the Saturn. In fact, the game is such a graphical overload it comes on two discs!

The amazing visuals are complimented by an extensive blues soundtrack composed by legendary guitarist Ronnie Montrose, which would explain the musical theme of the game. It's

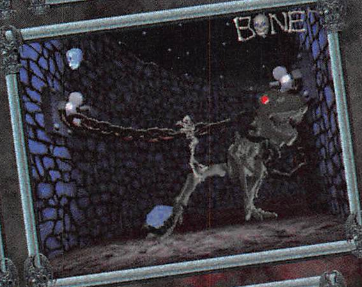


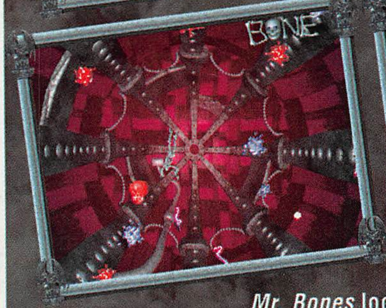


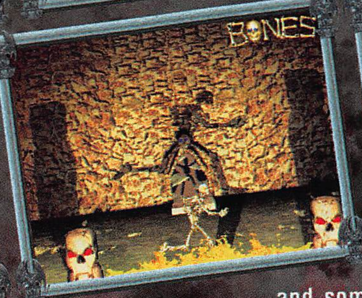












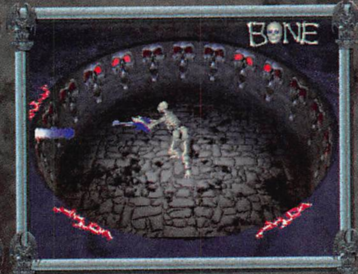


actually very good, and somehow manages to legitimize the stupidity of the whole thing. Once you get past how ridiculous *Mr. Bones* looks playing a guitar, you actually get caught up in the funkiness of it all. *Mr. Bones* has a cool atmosphere of weirdness that grows on you, like the cute little voices of the Lilliputians screaming 'They're taking me away!' By the time I finished the game, I had even started to warm to *Mr. Bones*. Sad but true.

Mr. Bones has a lot going for it. It's one of the most innovative titles I've seen all year, and is certainly very compelling. I'm not sure that there's much to make you return to it, once finished, but it's quite big and fairly tough (particularly The Icy Lake!). It's definitely not for everyone, but if you're a Saturn owner looking for something a little different, then you could do a lot worse than giving *Mr. Bones* a try. **K**



















R REVIEW

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - IGUANA

PUBLISHER - ACCLAIM

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER



E. STORM
Same Bat time, same bat channel.





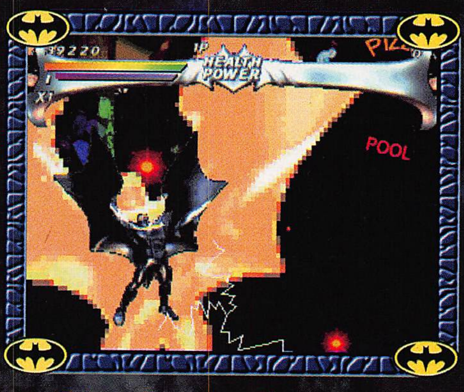




Almost a decade ago, arcade-goers marveled at Capcom's *Final Fight*, the first in what would become a string of side-scrolling beat-'em-up hits. The trend lasted for more than five years and spawned more offspring then a frisky hare, leaking onto both the Genesis and SNES before it died with the dawn of 32-bit.

Beat-'em-ups will inevitably resurface (as all genres eventually do), so the question becomes: In an age graced by such technical wonders as *Super Mario 64*, *Tomb Raider*, *Resident Evil* and so on, how will designers make them deep enough to capture our attention? Will a shiny outer shell and a plethora of digitized baddies do the trick? Well, Acclaim hopes so with their latest Saturn/PS release, *Batman Forever Arcade*. It's as if Iguana time warped back to the mid-eighties in designing *Batman Forever*, because it is in every respect an old school side-scrolling beater.

On the positive side, *BFA* is packed (and I stress the word *packed*) with power-ups that wield graphic insanity, bonus icons 'til the cows come home and enough button-slammin mania for the habitually hyperactive. Iguana has gone as far as adding a long list of combos for each caped crusader, but has packed the screen with so many enemies that attack simultaneously (unlike the staggered attacks in *Final Fight* or *Streets of Rage*) you're hard pressed to get one off. When you do, 100+ hit combos (especially with Robin) are commonplace. They serve little purpose though, as up to five enemies may jump you the second you come out of it. You're better off learning both characters' most effective moves for a given situation. There is a method to all the on-screen madness and herein lies BFA's best feature: You have to figure it all out; no longer is this game a quarter-munchin' walk through.



As you progress in each round, offing Two-Face and The Riddler's minions, by picking up bat-icons and

















prompts that appear for special attacks, your character's abilities constantly change. Additionally, you are rewarded after each round in relation to how well you've scored with a plethora of special modes, like VR, Bat Signal, Two-Face Yin-Yang, etc. When triggered, each gives you the upper hand... temporarily. Use them wisely. Unlike the coin-op, which featured unlimited continues, the most you'll get here are seven. You'll have to develop winning strategies to see the end of this version. This leads me to the one aspect of *BFA* that really irked me. After making all the right moves, pulling off a near-perfect round, if one single enemy gets the jump on you, a stunned Batman cannot counter, as you watch your life bar drain completely. Nearly every time you get stunned you lose a life. This snaps what balance the game has pretty badly.










Technically, *BFA* is a near perfect translation. Originally designed on Sega's Titan hardware, the only sacrifice Iguana had to make was in the size and frame rate of Batman and Robin. The loss in animation creates a rather annoying "skating" effect. Our heroes move at a brisk pace with animations equivalent of a slow walk. You'll have no time to notice this however, as you fight for your life from the opening second. The music in *BFA* is excellent, extracted from bits of the movie, as is the voice. You'll hear both Carrey and Tommy Lee Jones chime in as only they can.

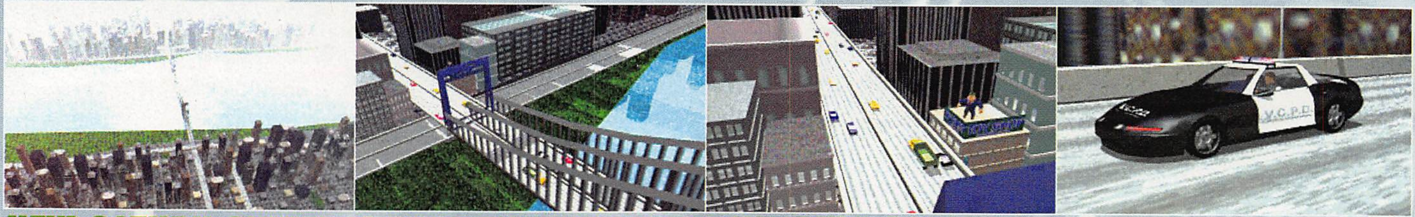
BFA is a fine production overall, with vivid, color-soaked graphics, effects out the wazoo and options we'd have only dreamt about back in the heyday of beat-'em-ups. But when all is said and done, it's nothing new or innovative, just an old theme dressed up in a new guise. **ES**











HEY! SATURN OWNERS! DUST DOWN YOUR LIGHT GUNS BECAUSE THOSE VIRTUA COPS ARE BACK IN THIS SEQUEL SMASH HIT!

Although I pride myself on having pretty good taste in games, I do have one weakness: gun games. I love 'em. I can't help it. I know they're repetitive, I know they're shallow, I know they're immoral - but damn, if you can't enjoy gunning down a few law breaking punks once in a while, what can you enjoy? And nobody does it better than officers James Cools and Michael Hardy, AKA. Rage and Smarty - the Virtua Cops.

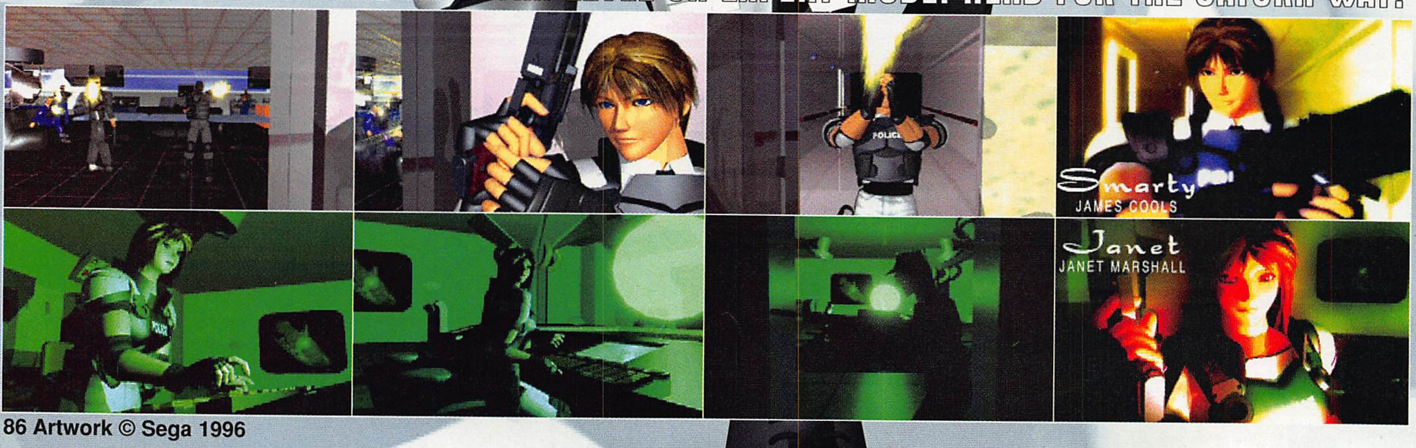
I wasn't sure what to expect from a Saturn conversion of Virtua Cop 2. Saturn Virtua Cop was near arcade perfect, but then the Virtua Cop coin-op only used Sega's Model 1 hardware (Virtua Cop 2 was Model 2). I guess after seeing how well the Saturn had handled other Model 2 conversions (Virtual On, Sega Rally and Virtua Fighter 2) my expectations running were pretty high, and once again Sega haven't disappointed. Saturn Virtua Cop 2 is every bit as impressive a translation as the original Virtua Cop, if not more so.

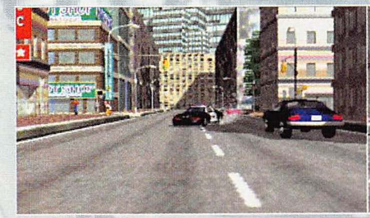
Graphically, AM2 have once again performed the impossible. Its not as high-res as the coin-op and there is a slight loss of detail on some of the 3D models, but other than that its all here - the destructible cars, the bullet holes, the breakable objects, the falling monitors - everything. The action runs at a constantly smooth 30fps, and while the original Saturn Virtua Cop also ran at 30fps, believe me - there's a heck of lot more going on here! There's twice as much environmental detail, and twice as many enemies to, er, 'arrest'. The sound is also arcade perfect, with CD streamed tunes and sampled FX. Most importantly though, the game play is *identical* to the coin-op. All the enemy appearance patterns, enemy reaction times, hit detection, hidden weapons, boss routines and stage paths have been accurately

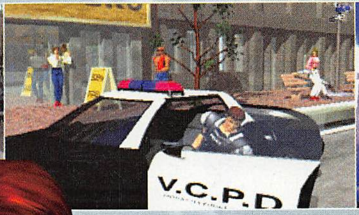


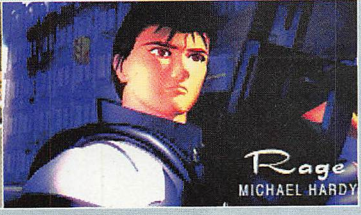


NEW FEATURES INCLUDE AN EXTRA LEVEL ON EXPERT MODE! HEAD FOR THE SATURN WAY!



















reproduced.

Virtua Cop 2 is amazingly good fun. Ok, I'm biased. I love gun games. But even if you don't love gun games this could be the one to sway you. The action is even more intense than the first Virtua Cop, and much more spectacular with it. Each level is structured around several incredible movie-like set pieces including a jewelry store heist, multiple car chases, a trip through a ferry, and even a tube ride. The adrenaline rush you get the first few of times you play the game is just awesome. Speed and death combined! What more could you ask for?

But what about after you play the game the first few of times? Well, to combat criticisms of the original Virtua Cop's longevity, AM2 have included two different route paths through *every* level, similar to Panzer Dragoon Zwei. This effectively doubles the size of the game, and adds immense replay value. There's also a final fourth level boss if you play the levels through in order, just like in the original Virtua Cop.

But it doesn't end there. Exclusive to the Saturn version you'll also find a cool rendered intro, a mirror mode, a big head mode, a Virtua Cop 1 mode (Virtua Cop's score accumulator, target, and hit flash) and best of all, an entirely new route path though Level 3. Believe me when I say that this is the coolest part in the game: a car chase along side a train then a shoot-out in a Virtua Cop style garage. Awesome! Virtua Cop also offers compatibility with the analog pad for mouse like aiming - much better then using a joypad.

There's no denying that the shooting action is repetitive. After all, you're doing the same thing to the same people go after go. But for me that's not a problem. Each new area represents a new challenge and a new strategy. Plus the long term enjoyment comes not from repeatedly completing the game, but from attempting the Ranking Mode. Just like the original Virtua Cop, playing the game with one credit (and being marked on performance) adds an entirely new dimension to the gameplay.

Virtua Cop 2 is a triumph of intelligent game design. Its a basic concept made entertaining simply through the sheer style of execution (pun intended). Until we see how Time Crisis comes out on the PlayStation, Virtua Cop 2 is the new king of home gun games. All hail to the king. KM





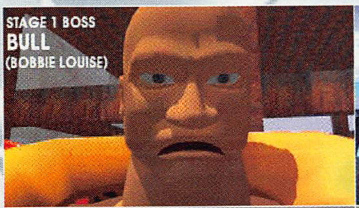


R REVIEW — SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - SEGA	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - SEGA	DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER

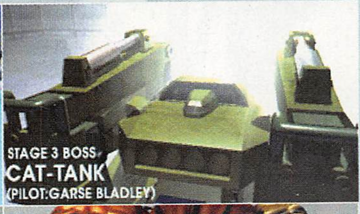


KNIGHTMARE









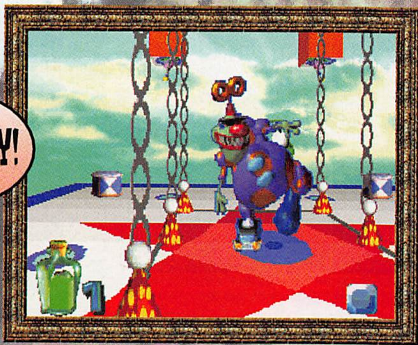









THE BUG IS BACK!













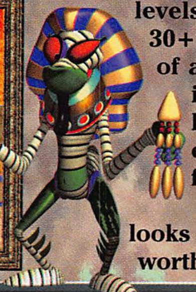
Cool! Christmas brings out the best in Sega! *Virtua Cop 2*, *Daytona USA CCE*, *Virtual On*, *Christmas Nights*, *Sonic Blast*, and what've we got here? Ha! *Bug Too!* What a stellar freakin' line-up. The Saturn may be the low man on the hardware totem pole, but geez, you know Sega cranks out killer software. Look elsewhere in this section for hot coverage on the other games, and read on for the bottom line on the cool *Bug Too!*

The first time I played *Bug!*, last year, I was blown away. At that time I had never before played my platformers in three-dimensionally constructed playfields, and it left me happy and bemused. You and I both know what's happened in the year since: *Mario* and *Crash*. I won't touch them, because despite all the talk, they're both beautiful, important games that have become classics overnight. And more importantly, *Bug!* games, by using rendered characters in polygonal environments, are a unique and separate platforming experience that no others have accomplished or replicated. I'd go as far as saying that Realtime is to Sega what Rare is to Nintendo, insofar as how well they use awesome rendered characters in polished platforming environments. In *Bug Too!*, the character renders are stunning in both their clarity, fluidity, and general design, while the texture-mapped polygonal levels flow by at a cool 30+frames per second. Best of all, you can see really far into the distance, partially due to the massive levels, but also due to the fantastic engine.

All right, so *Bug Too!* looks hot, but is the gameplay worthy of your skill? Oh yeah.









R REVIEW

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - REALTIME ASSOC.	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - SEGA	DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER



GLITCH
YOU MUST BE PULLING MY ANTENNAS, IT'S ANOTHER GREAT BUG! GAME



BOSS STRATEGIES!

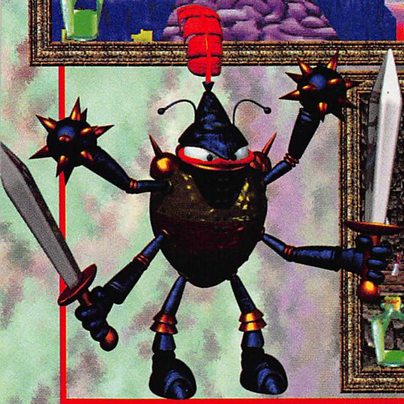
LEFT: This hacker ain't so tough. First off, run all the way to the back of the area and score some Bug juice. Get close, jump away as he blows smoke, but immediately turn back and fire.

BELOW: The knight throws three knives, and each gets closer to you. Simply jump and shoot (at a distance) during the first two throws, but avoid the third. Repeat this and he's yours.

RIGHT: The Dragonfly will shoot at you almost constantly. Grab the bug juice, and use the holes in the ground to dodge fireballs. Avoid the wraiths, and keep plugging away till he falls.

BELOW: This salty boss is pretty tough. Snipers will gun you from the background, and crabs snap at your toes. Bounce off of the crabs directly onto his oh-so-pointy crown for the hit.



















If you remember, *Bug!* had that wacky mix of humor and cool action, constantly keeping you amused and involved. *Bug Too!* is a funny action platformer gone mad. This time you can do it all with a choice of three characters: Bug (duh!), Maggot Dog, or the questionable Superfly. Bug's as cool as ever (and this time he floats if you press and hold jump in mid-air), Maggot Dog's a freaky, tongue spittin' little guy, and Superfly's a 70's influenced afro-totin', platform shoe-wearin' punk (who seems to think everything's "Too funky" *all* the time). The enemies are a bizarre consortium of insects like Larva Spooks, Mosquito Vampires, and Bob the Peace-Lovin' Cappuccino-Drinkin' Alien (?!)... and they do all kinds of weird things to squash you good! And finally, just like the original game, the bosses are so totally weird (and cool), with such butt-wild, psycho, off the wall patterns and attacks, it's not even funny... no wait, they're so funny it *hurts*.

What else can I say? Oh, the music's some of the best platforming stuff ever, and the control, apart from the various idiosyncracies associated with the new characters, is almost precisely like the original (meaning just fine). It all comes down to this: With original quality titles like *Bug Too!*, Saturn gamers are well taken care of. Just 'cause your little black box has the wimpiest guts doesn't mean you won't be havin' fun. **G**





INCREDIBLY HUGE AND ALWAYS WACKY, EACH LEVEL CONTAINS UP TO 4

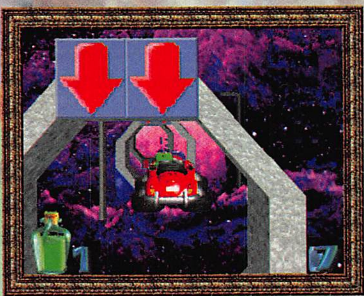
BONUS LEVELS!



The gargantuan sized levels are comprised of extremely varied timed platform jumping sections, lever-pulling puzzle solving, and a whole range of wild sub-games and bizarre bonus rounds. You'll be hoppin' in the rocket-powered "Space Buggy" to negotiate insane first person rings, lockin' yourself into the 'Mutator' for a shrink job, and mounting cyber-bugs (see render, left) to steer them into barrage after barrage of gunfire... too cool!














MASS DESTRUCTION




Never has a name so aptly described a game. If this 3 level pre-beta is anything to go by, *Mass Destruction* is a game of hardcore carnage and little else. Not that that's necessarily a bad thing: Everybody needs a bit of wanton destruction in their lives from time to time, especially when it looks as good as this.

Mass Destruction is a top down *Loaded*-style scrolling shoot-'em-up that places you in command of a highly versatile and heavily armed assault tank. I'm not sure of the story or game structure yet, but it seems like the main objective is to trundle around the landscape blowing up various key targets to complete missions. No doubt there will be more variations in the final version, but we'll have to wait and see.



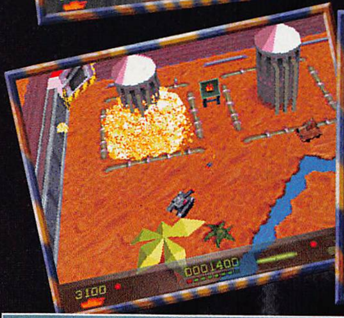

The tank itself moves using real vehicle momentum, with up and down moving the tank forward and backward, and left and right turning. The control is extremely responsive, but unfortunately there is no strafe button making it tricky to dodge enemy fire or negotiate tight spots. To compensate for this you can rotate the tanks turret with the L and R shoulder buttons, enabling you to fire in a different direction than the way you're moving, but it's a pretty awkward system. I guess a strafe button would have made things a bit too easy, huh guys?




Even in this early version of the game (maybe 10%), it's already apparent that the graphics are pretty special. All of the vehicles and buildings are constructed of polygons and the 3D effect is very solid. Everything shifts perspective correctly as you drive along, and the frame rate is consistently high, giving the game a smooth, almost 'PlayStation' feel to it. And yes, that's a compliment.




It's too early to comment on gameplay yet, but what's there so far is great fun. Your tank possesses an impressive range of weaponry (including mines, heat-seeking rockets and a flame thrower) and you can destroy absolutely everything, from churches to skyscrapers! We'll bring you more on *Mass Destruction* next month. ***K***






PREVIEW

SEGA SATURN

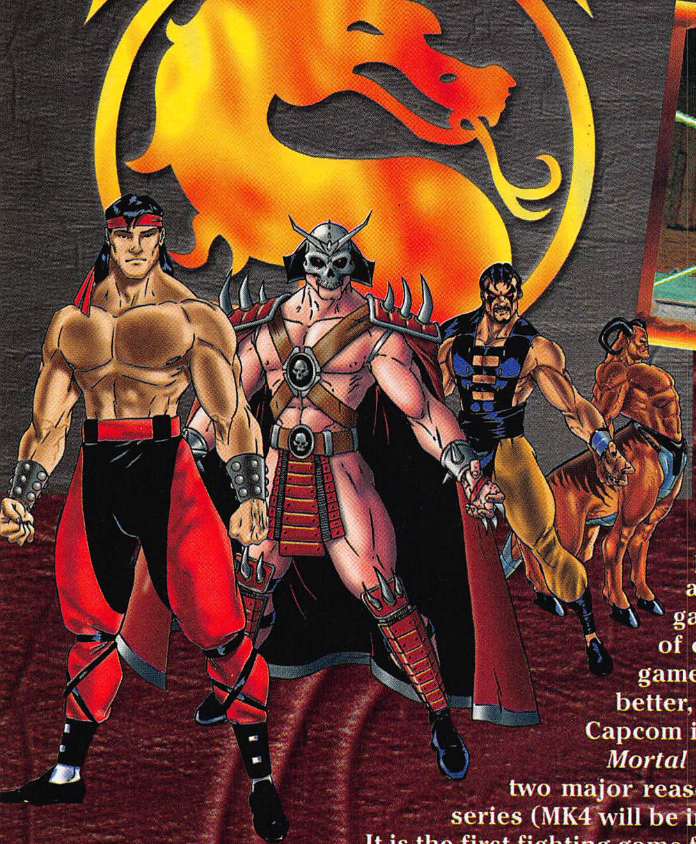
DEVELOPER - NMS SOFTWARE
PUBLISHER - BMG
FORMAT - CD
OF PLAYERS - 1
DIFFICULTY - N/A
AVAILABLE - MARCH '97



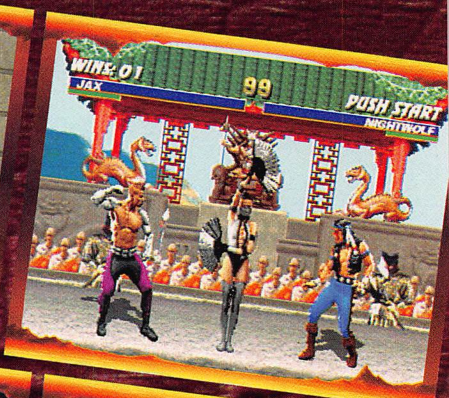
KNIGHTMARE
Fire when ready! Aim for the happy face you swine. HA!

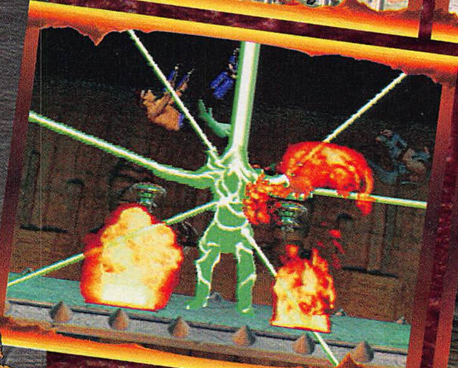

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PlayStation
NINTENDO64
M2
(COMING IN '97)
SEGA SATURN

MORTAL KOMBAT TRILOGY











When a game becomes as popular as *MK*, it transcends qualitative judgment. The original *MK* lured in arcade-goers with its digitized graphics and blood, and by the time people realized that there really wasn't much game-play to back up the novelty visuals, it was too late. MK had become a phenomenon, and as the inevitable sequels started to flow, gamers everywhere shoveled in bucket-loads of quarters in the hope of chancing across a new fatality or secret. It didn't matter how the game played. It was *MK* and that was enough. To be fair, *MK2* was a lot better, but *MK3*, *Ultimate MK3* and now *MK Trilogy*? Who said Capcom is the only one flogging a dead horse?

Mortal Kombat Trilogy on the N64 is a significant release for two major reasons. First, it marks the final 2D installment of the MK series (MK4 will be in 3D), and secondly, it marks a lot of firsts for the N64. It is the first fighting game for the N64, the first N64 game to demonstrate the system's 2D power, and the first game to use the N64 controller's D-pad. These are all aspects I'll discuss later on in the review, but for now, let's talk story...

In the original *MK*, Shang Tsung and his Outworld minions stood ready to invade the earth if a warrior from our realm could not defeat his champion, prince Goro, and win the Mortal Kombat tournament. A small band of earth's finest fighters rose up to meet the challenge, and in the end the warrior monk Liu Kang was victorious, defeating both Goro and Shang Tsung to become the new MK champion.

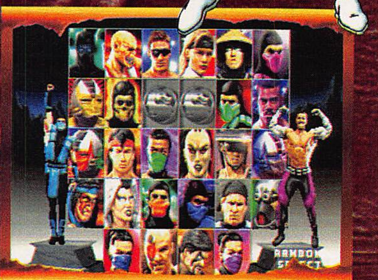
But his victory was short lived. Liu Kang and his comrades found themselves lured to compete in a second MK tournament, this time in Shang Tsung's home territory: the Outworld. In *MK2* the earth warriors fought against the might of Kintaro and Shao Kahn – Shang Tsung's master – and even though they were successful, their fight was far from over.











REVIEW

NINTENDO64

DEVELOPER - WILLIAMS	# OF PLAYERS - 1 - 8
PUBLISHER - WILLIAMS	DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
FORMAT - 96 MB CART	AVAILABLE - NOW



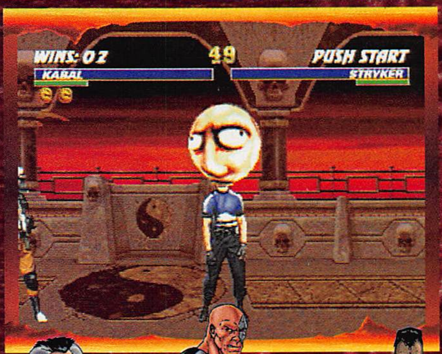
KNIGHTMARE
More to love...











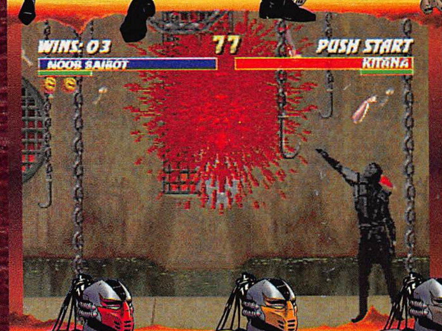


The Outworld MK2 tournament was merely a diversion, a scheme devised by Shao Kahn that would allow him to break the rules set by the elder Gods and resurrect his queen, Sindel, in the earth realm itself. This unholy act would allow Shao Kahn to step through the dimensional gates and reclaim his queen, thus granting him the power to crush earth's defenses and take over the planet. Upon hearing this, the earth warriors quickly returned from the Outworld to their native realm and recruited new members, ready to fight their final battle. These are the trilogy of events which comprise the three MK tournaments.



MK Trilogy features a whopping 30 characters taken from all of the *MK* games; including 26 instantly playable, 2 bosses (playable via a code in the N64 version) and 2 hidden characters: Human Smoke and Khameleon (also playable via a code). New characters to *MK Trilogy* include: Johnny Cage (new actor), Rayden (*MK2* version), Baraka (*MK2*), Super Sub Zero (*MK2* Sub Zero with *MK3*'s human Sub Zero moves) and Khameleon. Khameleon is a transparent female character with all the female Ninja's special moves in one (the PS Khameleon was all the male ninja's moves in one). 30 is the greatest number of characters yet seen in an MK game (not to mention any other fighting game) and learning every character's moves and fatalities should keep *MK* fans busy for months. Also exclusive to the N64 *MK Trilogy*, both Motaro and Shao Kahn have fatalities! Even though they use existing animations, they're still pretty cool.







MK Trilogy utilizes the same style game engine as *MK3* though with a few significant changes. The gameplay is still composed of a five button control system, run meter and

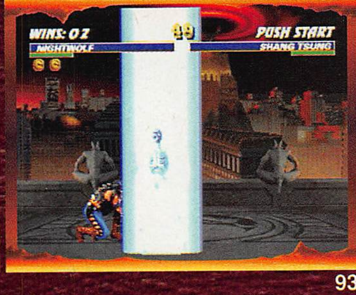


FATALITY

















Tekken-style preset memorized combos (blech!), though in *Trilogy* it's slightly faster than before. The CPU AI is cheesy as ever (fair is obviously not a word in Williams' vocabulary) and I guarantee you'll be throwing your pad around in frustration as the CPU characters react to moves that no human player ever could. The game actually *encourages* you to find cheesy loops and traps to beat your opponents, and that can't be a good thing. Also (as much as I hate to bring it up *again*), I just can't get used to a block button in a 2D fighter. 3D fighters, maybe, but 2D? It just ain't right!





MK Trilogy introduces a 'new' feature to the *MK* series: the Aggressor bar. As the player inflicts hits on their opponent the word 'aggressor' slowly builds up at the bottom of the screen (like the Super Combo bar in *Street Fighter Alpha*) and when the word is fully spelled, the player enters Aggressor mode. Once in Aggressor mode the player's character is followed by a shadow (like *SFA2*'s custom combo shadow), and he/she then inflicts more damage per hit. It may be a blatant rip off of *Street Fighter Alpha 2*, but is actually a pretty cool feature which adds a sorely needed element of strategy to the proceedings.





The controls take a bit of getting used on the N64 pad. *MK Trilogy* makes use of both the Nintendo controller's D-pad and analog stick, though neither work satisfactorily. The analog stick may be a Godsend for games that require analog input, but here it makes characters with tap motions a real pain in the butt to control (characters with rolling commands are a little easier). The d-pad is much better – better than the PlayStation's diagonally challenged pad – but still no way NEAR as comfortable as the old SNES pad used to be. You're forced to position your hands around the side handle bars, and while you do get used it, it still bugs.

Worst of all, though, are the four yellow view keys. Obviously in a fighting game these buttons are absolutely crucial, and the moment you start playing you realize the N64 pad's biggest flaw: they are WAY to





ANIMALITY

















small to be accurately differentiated by your thumb. This bodes very badly for future fighting games on the N64 pad, and raises the necessity for a decent 3rd party fighting pad.

Graphically, *MK Trilogy* on the N64 is much sharper than the PlayStation version. Every detail has been ported from the arcade and, in some cases, improved upon for the home version. The characters are bigger, projectiles now turn transparent when they hit a character and some of the backgrounds have new details (e.g. Shao Khan's cave background now features a glowing floor and background clouds). These improvements are nice, but only nick the surface of the N64's power. With a bit more effort, Williams could have really gone to town on the effects and made this a showcase for the N64's 2D power. As it is, it's the worst looking N64 game so far. I mean, at times there's even the old SNES bugaboo: slow down (particularly when two characters are in aggressor mode). Come on! This is supposed to be 64-bit power here!!!



The sound effects in *MK Trilogy* are arcade perfect. Every sample has been ported directly from the coin-op to the N64 and all of them sound very clear, if a little deep. Unfortunately, *MK Trilogy* continues in the N64 tradition of having really weak music. If there's one area where N64 has yet to prove itself, it's in the sound. *MK Trilogy*'s music sounds like *MK2* on the SNES, though to be honest, it's mostly covered up during Kombat with screams and thuds. Which is just as well really.

That all sounds a bit negative doesn't it? Well it shouldn't. *MK Trilogy* is by no means a terrible game. I mean look at the positive points. For a start, it's on cartridge, which means NO LOADING TIMES. No loading during random kombat, no loading during Shang Tsung's morphs – no loading at all! There are two rows of goodies (Shao Khan's treasure) to choose from when you complete the game versus the PlayStation's meager one, and a new three-on-three Kombat mode exclusive to the N64.



N64 *MK Trilogy* is also the most playable version of *MK* yet. The CPU AI may be insane, but Williams has removed some of the cheaper moves and traps to make *MK Trilogy* a far more balanced two player game than its predecessors. Personally, I prefer the *Street Fighter* series, but there's no denying that *MK* is fast, brutal, bloody fun. It's the best home version of *Mortal Kombat* that money can buy, and therefore an essential purchase for MK fans. For the rest of us though, it's just a little disappointing for the first N64 fighting game. ***K***







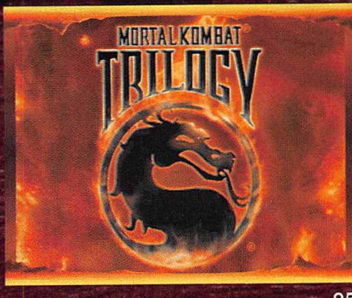


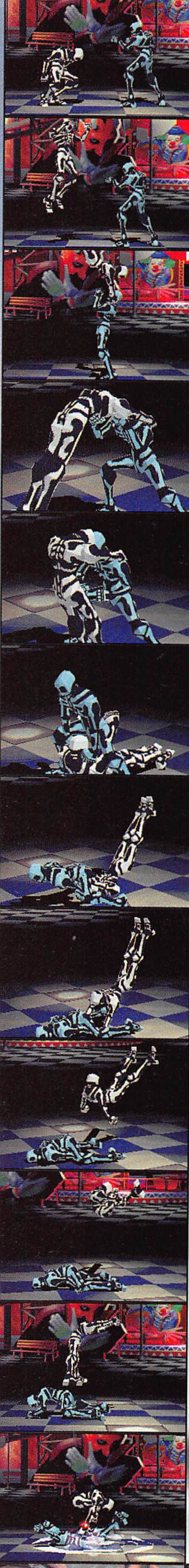
















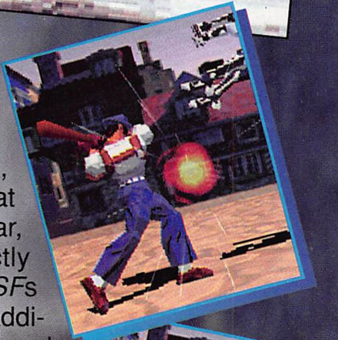


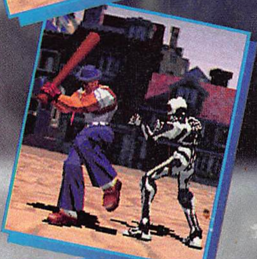




Uh, you'll have to forgive me; we've been up for many, many hours and the issue is due in... let's see... 11 minutes! These *Street Fighter EX* shots came in quite literally just as the issue was closing from our friends at Arika, the development team behind this game. So, what's new in *SFEX*? Five new characters and a guard crush technique that requires one block of super energy. The new fighters include Pullum Purna, an Arabian female fighter, Cracker Jack, a Canadian, Hokuto, a new Japanese girl, Doctrine Dark, some freak with playing cards and a garotte, and Skullomania, a circus performer clad in spandex. The returning characters are Ryu, Ken, Chun-Li, Guile, and Zangief. From what we've seen so far, *EX* plays exactly like previous *SF*s except for the addition of the guard crush moves... and polygons. There are no 3-D elements to the gameplay. We'll have much more on this PlayStation-based Capcom title next issue... I know this looks a bit thrown together, but we just *had* to fit it into the issue...

- Nick Rox

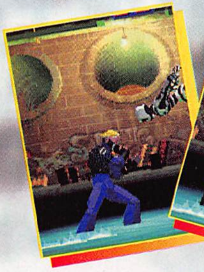










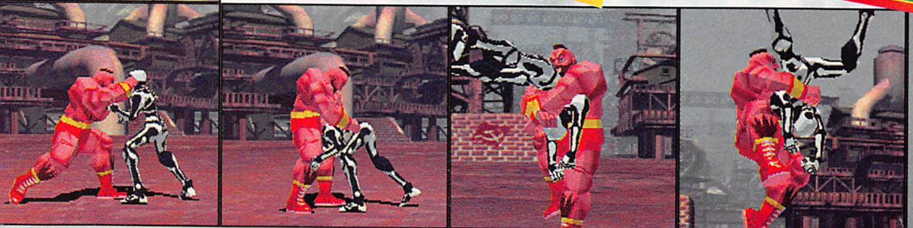














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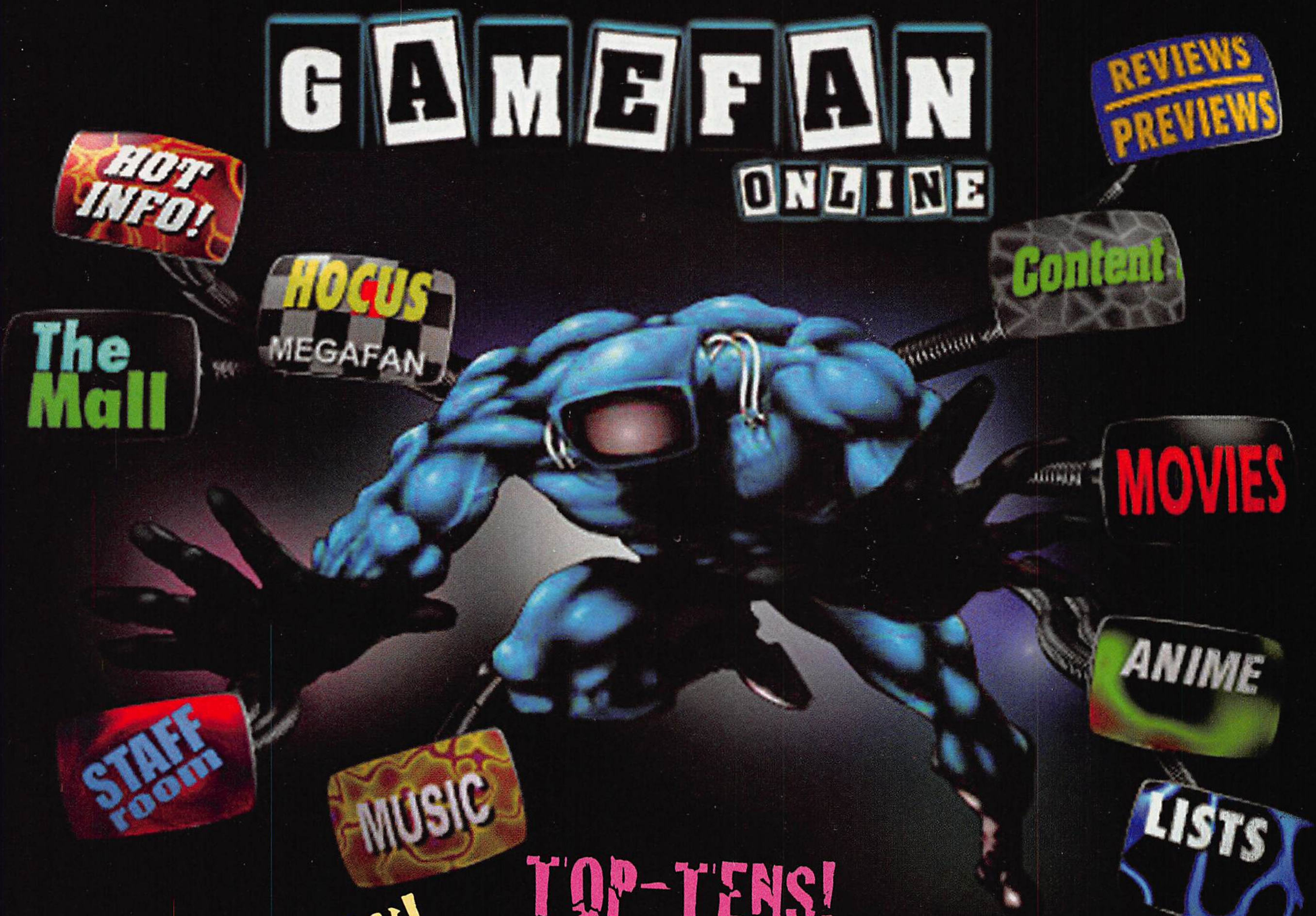
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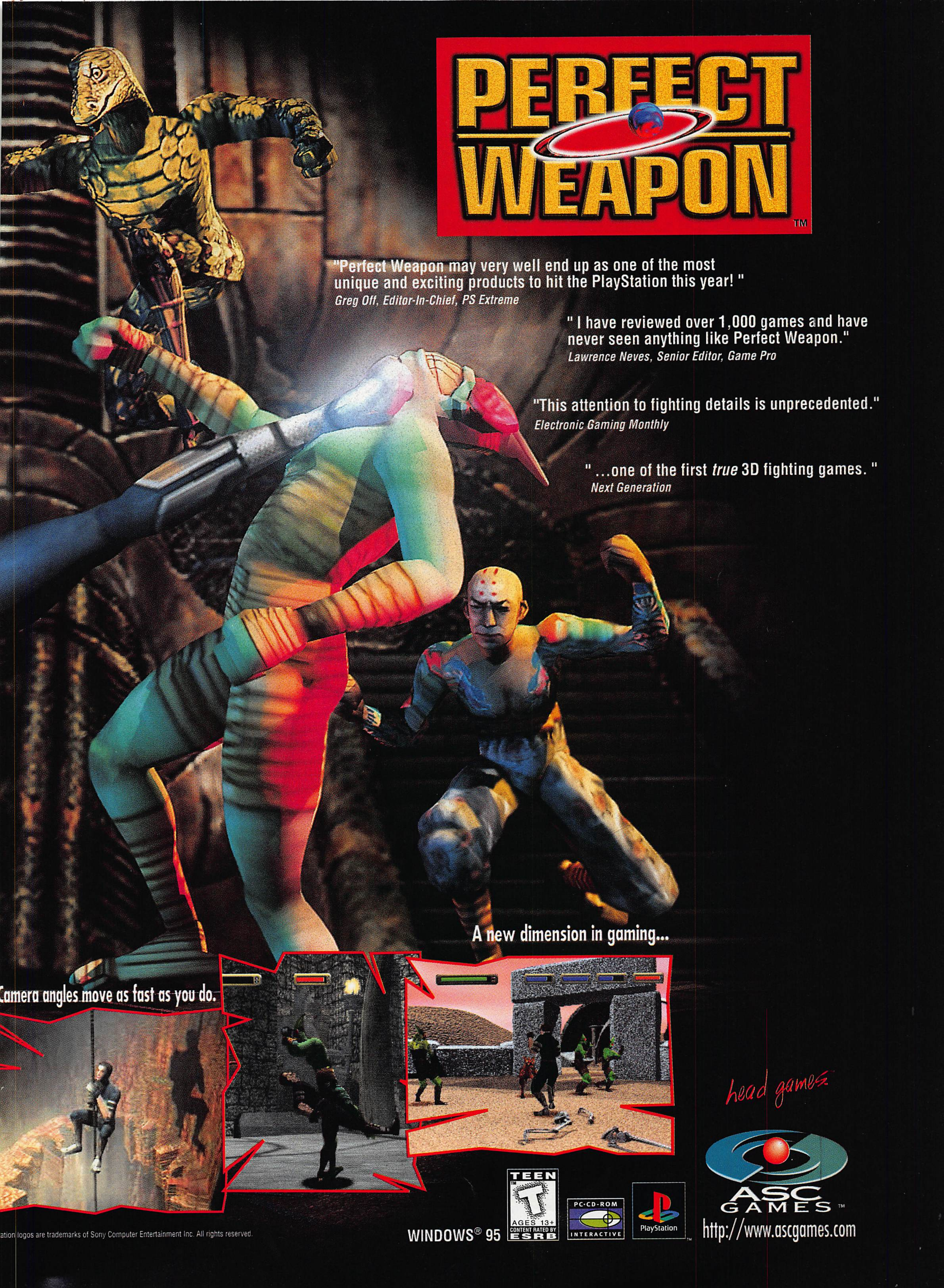
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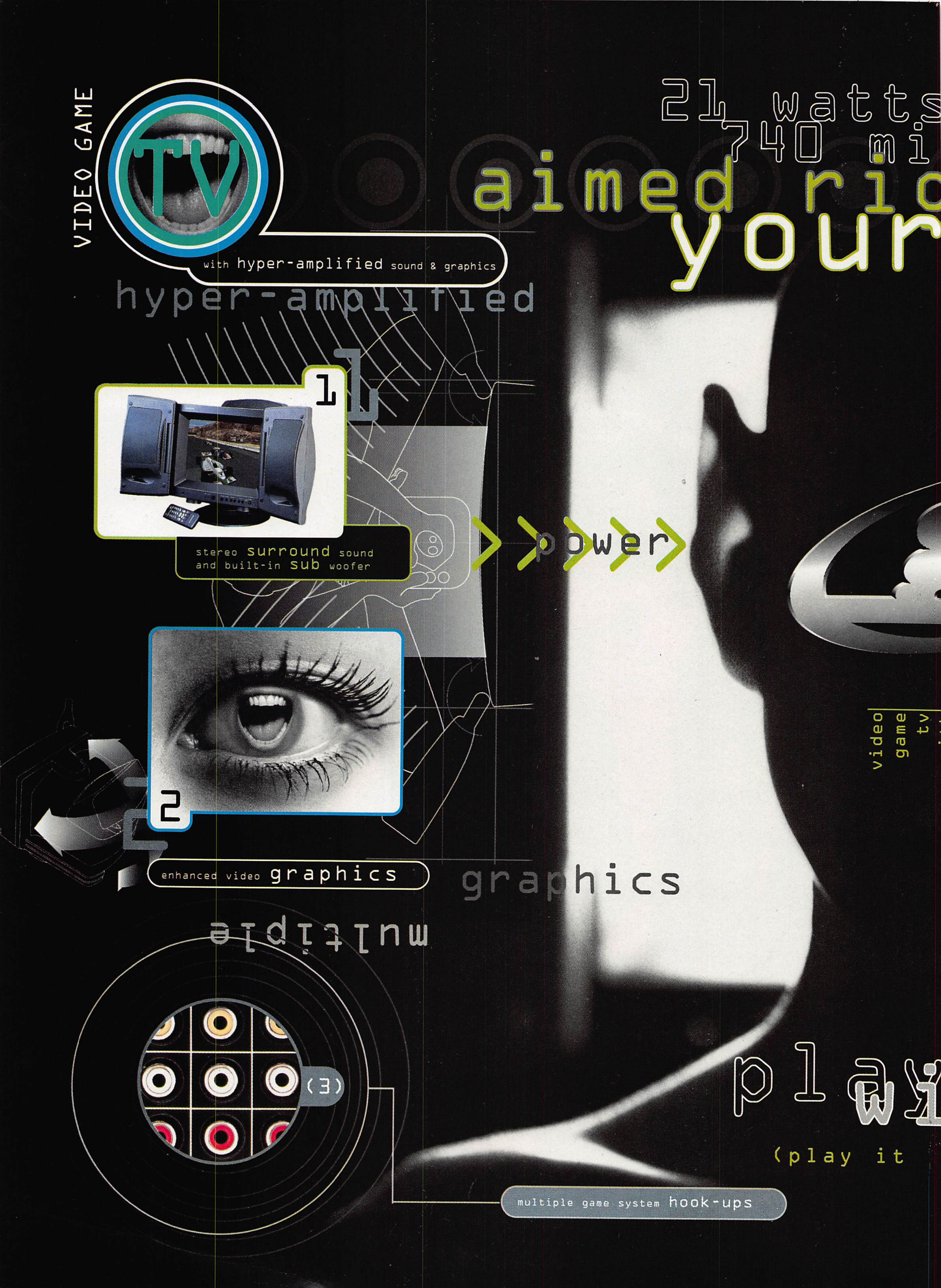


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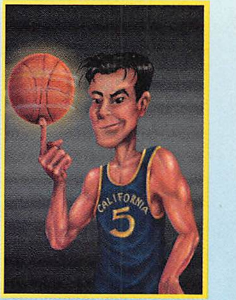


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GAMEFAN SPORTS


JOE KIDD


JACQUES STRAP

VIEWPOINT

"STRAP" / "JOE"

Well, well, all this work and the game still has problems. It's sad really. This game has absolutely knockout texture-mapped polygonal players and stadiums, great play-by-play by some famous Brit (sorry, Chief), and great options. So what's the problem? Poor control. Sure, you can set up pretty plays, lob, chip, banana flick, etc., but expect do be doing it in slow motion. The response time is just too slow to reckon with the gorgeous, natural motion of, let's say, *WWS '97*.

G	C	P	M	O	
10	6	7	8	8	77



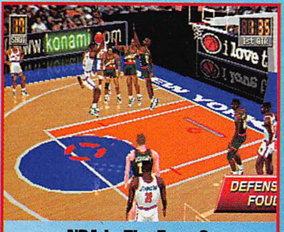
FIFA Soccer '97
PlayStation
Electronic Arts

Over 4200 real life players, playable in 6 different languages, Motion Blended graphics, this game has EA written all over it. It's easy to see why this is the top selling soccer title in the world. The crowd gets you pumped and the shoot-out is hot! 8 different camera views, and indoor or outdoor stadiums are available to choose from. EA doesn't compromise a single detail, and you'll be sure to appreciate.

G	C	P	M	O	
9	8	8	8	8	91

Wow, another game that pounds everything else in its class. Nothing can touch *Zone 2's* amazing animation. Your players seriously act like real-life players, with fakes, drives, and mind-blowing dunks that you gotta lay your eyes on to understand. While the polygons tend to glitch during replays (who cares), watching the game from afar might look like a real, live broadcast, it's so good. And hee hee, polygonal men and women singing the anthems.

G	C	P	M	O	
10	9	8	8	8	94


NBA In The Zone 2
PlayStation
Konami

Man, am I spoiled. This game is so good... you know I'm just happy. This will climb to the top of the charts for hoops fans, with its fast-paced game play, tremendous graphics, excellent sound effects, player creation mode and trade options. Signature moves and spectacular dunks will get you out of your seats. Alley-oop baby, this one will slam you.

G	C	P	M	O	
8	9	9	9	8	96

Too bad *WWS '97* is out there, 'cause VR Soccer is one of the best footy games available. The polygonal field movement is surprisingly smooth, considering every player on field is also constructed of well-animated polygons. As far as gameplay goes, while it's not as complex as *WWS '97*, the amount of moves and formations at your disposal is right on. Let's face facts though, you're probably not going to buy *two* soccer games this year, right? *WWS '97* conquers all.

G	C	P	M	O	
8	8	7	7	8	80



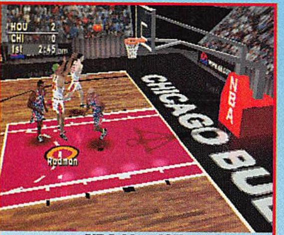
VR Soccer
Saturn
VR Sports

The popularity of soccer games is spreading across the world. Yes, this sport has international appeal, and *VR Soccer* has captured it. Smooth, flowing graphics, full rosters with each player's strengths and weaknesses, and a sensational 360-degree perspective make this a fast-paced game. I love being able to change the camera angle without stopping the game, but I didn't care for the absence of sound effects, which takes away from the full experience.

G	C	P	M	O	
8	8	8	3	5	76

Another runner-up game. Yeah, if *Zone 2* wasn't out, *NBA Live '97* would rule. The players are extremely well animated, including cool pumps and hyper-fast slams. My biggest beef would have to be with the puny number of perspectives available in the game, and perhaps the lame set-up screens. I'm reaching though, because no matter how you look at it, *Live '97* is a really fun game of B-ball.

G	C	P	M	O	
8	8	8	7	7	82



NBA Live '97
PlayStation
Electronic Arts

It's like the NBA finals with *IT Zone 2* and *NBA Live '97*. Both are extreme heavy hitters. While I believe *Zone* offers better playability/control, *Live* takes the reality factor. Pace is more realistic, options are more specific, and execution is more precise. *Live's* got one other thing that *Zone* doesn't – Shaquille O'Neal! Can't miss.

G	C	P	M	O	
9	8	8	9	9	95

WorldWide Soccer '97 is the finest soccer game ever seen, anywhere, on any system. The first time you play it, the incredible graphics will win you over. Play it twice, and the amazing play mechanics will hook you. After a third play, you'll be astounded by the bulk of options and formations. Play it a fourth time, and... nah, just kiddin'. At that point you'll see for yourself why *WWS '97* is superior to everything else out there, period.

G	C	P	M	O	
10	10	10	9	9	97

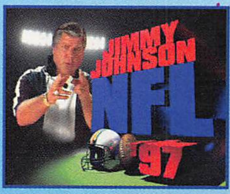

World Wide Soccer
Saturn
Sega

Well, 3 soccer titles this month and they just kept getting better. *World Wide Soccer* was, for me, the most entertaining and fluid of the three. Great camera angles, excellent control, smooth paced, great commentary and sound effects, and those bicycle kicks! I love the zoom option; the players look fantastic as well. Tons of strategy involved in this one and very easy to understand. Load time between screens is very smooth and relatively short, so action is practically constant. Great game.

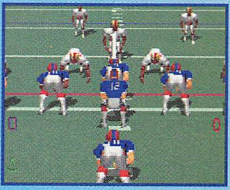
G	C	P	M	O	
9	9	9	9	9	92

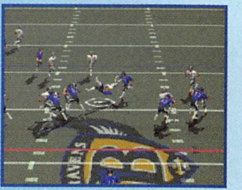
GameFan Sports Preview

JIMMY JOHNSON NFL '97



Good ol' Jimmy seems to have bet his namesake on a pretty cool piece of pigskin gaming. We're not sure to what degree J.J. was involved in the making of this game, but Konami has obviously done their homework. Including a full NFL license, as well as massive amounts of NFL FMV goodies, this game is loaded with a hard-core fan's every NFL related need. *Jimmy Johnson* was programmed by Gametek, but it almost seems as though the Sega team responsible for *NFL '97* had a chat with Gametek or vice-versa. Yeah, with passing arcs, create player features, and a strikingly similar team selection screen and game engine, side by side comparisons might raise an eyebrow or two. Anyway, we'll be back soon with more coverage.





KIDD'S CORNER



Joe Kidd here, representing over at GameFan Magazine. Welcome to the new era of internet (www.gamefan.com) and sports games. Fantasy football leagues are running full steam ahead, while fantasy hoops is on a head-on collision course. Servers are crashing everywhere, causing widespread panic and frenzy. Leave the sports page behind, the tedium of stat-tracking over 2600 NBA games and 300 players has ended. Now every last bit of info from Barkley's rebounds in '89 to Shaq's favorite food in '96. Unofficially, over 8,000 subscribers have flocked to ESPN's Fantasy Basketball League while over 14,000 have gone to Fantasy Football! Others of us are strapped into our recliners situated in front of the big screen, firing up our newly expanded libraries of amazing sports games. And here we are at GF sprinting forward to unite the two in a fusion of dreamscape and reality. Now if only we could figure out how to manipulate the health and fitness aspect of it all...

Summer has passed us by and Winter has rolled in like a storm. EA launched an all-out assault of top quality sports games on the market, demonstrating to all once again that the territory of sports games is "My house!" In a world filled with *Mario* players, *Tekken 2* warriors, *Killer Instinct* mercenaries, and *Mortal Kombat* monsters, Dave Dempsey, Manager of Media Relations at EA Sports reminds us that "At any given time, 35% of the Top Ten selling games are sports titles." Let the games begin. ***JK***



OPEN ICE

GAMEFAN SPORTS

PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - WILLIAMS
PUBLISHER - WILLIAMS
FORMAT - CD
OF PLAYERS - 1-
DIFFICULTY - N/A
AVAILABLE - DECEMBER



I put so many quarters into *Open Ice* in the arcades. Playin' it with a buddy all day was too fun. But besides the sentimental value, I'm really happy to see *Open Ice* comin' home because I know the PlayStation can pull off a perfect translation without a hitch. After putting many hours into our preview copy, I'm happy to say it's going to be arcade exact.

The basic principle of *Open Ice* is this: Hit, score, and hit again. *NBA Jam* freaks (even those who don't follow the hockey scene too closely), should feel at home with the sweet simplicity of *Open Ice*. Fast-paced 3-on-3 games, complete with exaggerated super-checks, wild speed bursts,









and flaming pucks, are the trademark of *Open Ice*. Score three straight and you'll be "on fire," zooming around the rink with an unlimited speed burst and crushing slapshot firepower. Just like *Jam*'s super-dunks, if you enter certain "sweet spots" around the goal as you speed-burst, and immediately take a shot, your player will do special moves like back-flip slapshots or hyper wrist shots (complete with a cool blue and green shadow effect).

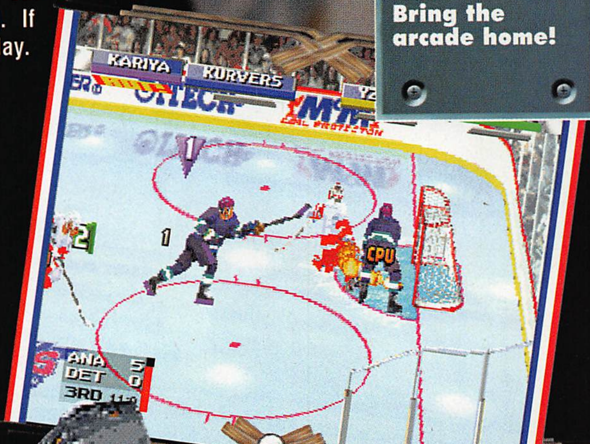
Well, I don't want to give too much away. The graphics are dead-on so far, with a perfectly line-scrolling rink, cool flaming effects, and players that scale in and out depending on how deep they are in the playfield (*NBA Jam*, anyone?). If you've played *Open Ice* before, though, you'll know it's all about gameplay. Strap's back soon with a hard-core review, so join me then. ***JS***



JACQUE STRAP
Bring the arcade home!







HE SHOOTS... HE SCORES!!



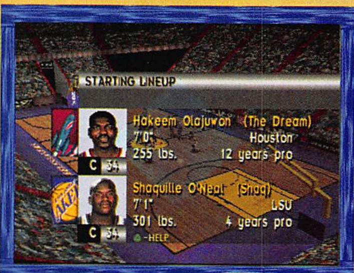






EA'S NBA LIVE '97 PARTY @ CED'S GAME PALACE











NBA LIVE 97



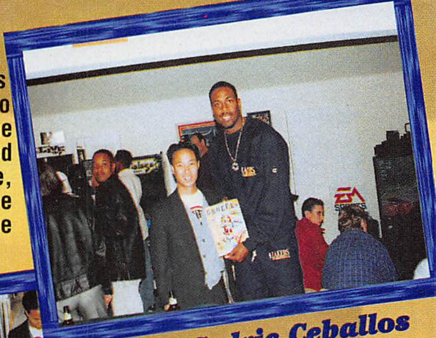






EA's very own NBA Live '97 release party was held at Cedric Ceballos' Game Palace and GameFan was on the scene. The camera crews rolled in, caterers laid out their spread, and EA set up 6 game stations for partygoers to try out their latest sports creation. Professional basketball players, movie stars and entertainers alike showed up in enthusiastic anticipation for the game that's so exciting, so real, it's called "Live." Cheers from all corners of the room, oohs and ahhs intermittently, as the spirit of competition and sportsmanship prevailed. After playing *Live* for the first time, Ceballos claimed, "*NBA Live '97* is the closest you can get to the real thing," except, "He (his game character) is slower than the real thing."

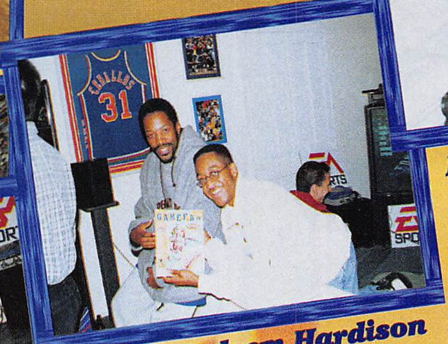
Believe it or not, having the release party at Ceballos' house was due not only in part to his notoriety as a Los Angeles Laker, but more importantly because he represents a growing majority of professional athletes turning to video games, in particular EA sports titles. EA believes the success of sports games lie in the head to head competition. The very element of competition that got these players to the professional level, is what pushes them to find other, untapped fields of adrenaline-filled competition. The authenticity of the game has gamers everywhere playing vicariously as GM, coach, and player. Ceballos continued, "You don't have to be a great athlete... big, fast or strong to be good at this."



Host Cedric Ceballos and GF Sports Editor Rustin "Joe Kidd" Lee



NBA superstars Charles "Bo" Outlaw and Cedric Ceballos in a heated battle.



Actor Kadeem Hardison & Jaleel White are thrilled about the gift GameFan provided them!

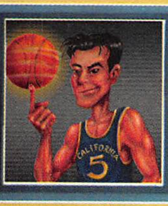


Family Matters star Jaleel "Urkel" White enjoys an intense game!

Jason Wagers, a member of the Lakers court crew said, "60% of the NBA has these games. When they're on the road they're only doing 3 things: riding on a bus, at the gym practicing or in their hotel playing video games." Why not? They're compact, mobile, and extremely easy to hook up. With the recent flood of rookie crops sprouting up in the NBA, there's a new, younger generation and video games are bigger and better than ever before. A lot of the players still have their sturdy, traditional Sega Genesis systems, and talk is more epidemic than ever of the legendary gridiron battles of *Madden*. But what better way to kill some free time than to get a little *NBA Live* tourney going? Or a little *Madden* after the Rockets game? In fact, Jerome Kersey bought his PlayStation on the road because, "Everyone else has one!" While there is certainly a time to just play solo against the computer, I was informed that most of the guys are playing these games tournament-style; in other words, there's major incentive to get their very own systems and practice up, lest they be de-faced by their opponents and teammates.

GAMEFAN SPORTS — R REVIEW — PlayStation

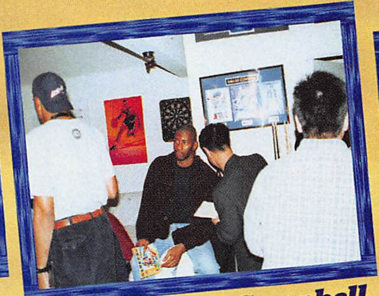
DEVELOPER - EA	# OF PLAYERS - 1-8
PUBLISHER - EA	DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW



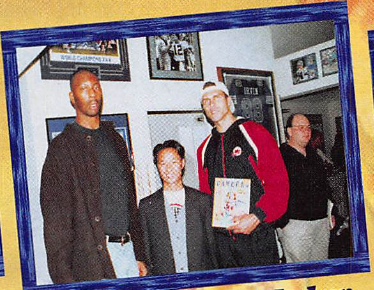
JOE KIDD
THE CLOSEST YOU CAN GET TO THE REAL THING!



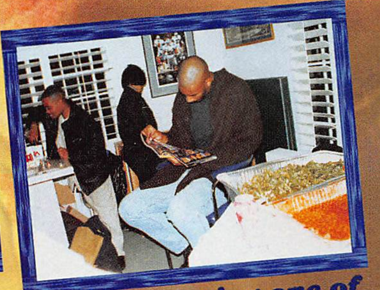
"Joe Kidd" showing off his superior hoops skills!



JK and Elden Campbell talk in-depth about video games (He's a fighting game fanatic!)



JK amongst LA Laker giants Elden Campbell and Trevor Wilson



Elden enjoying one of his favorite mags. (GameFan, of course!)

Rarely do we have a sports game simulated as accurately as EA's *NBA Live '97*. Because when EA creates a game, it's not just their perspective, but instead a culmination of the players', officials', announcers', coaches', and the media's perspective and input that prevail. It's one thing to be able to have all of the statistical simulation, and it's another to have the game reenact real basketball action. Not only does EA have gamers like me to appease, but have the added pressure of knowing that the actual NBA players, the same players EA sought feedback from, are going to be looking for themselves in the game, and are gonna want to see the real deal. In fact, Mitch Richmond gave even more than just verbal input, he actually came down to EA's studios to be the subject of the latest Motion Capture Technology.





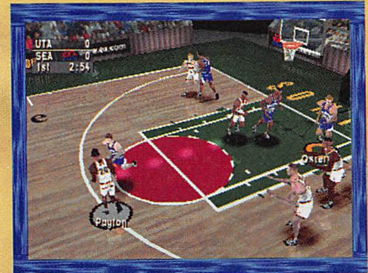
The 1997 version of *NBA Live* is complete with offensive sets and defensive strategies with animated play diagram walk-thrus. Each arena is authentic and 3D, with 8 zoom-option cameras set up to catch every dunk, every behind-the-back pass, every no call, and every brick. The new textured polygon players have such wonderful detail, you can see things like battling for position under the boards, and I could have sworn I saw Shawn Kemp grinning after he threw one down. Hit the free agent market, or trade within a pool of over 300 real players ('95-'96 stats), including Shaq and all of this year's exciting rookies like Shareef and Iverson. Can't find your ideal player? Create one of your own and customize everything from his alma mater to ball handling skills. Stat tracking is available to those who enjoy season play. Coach always tell you never to leave your feet without knowing where you're going? Well, in case you do, you can now bail yourself out by passing to an outlet player for an assist – "I meant to do that." One of the more underrated features of the game is the smooth, cross-hair free throwing procedure – no more whiplash.





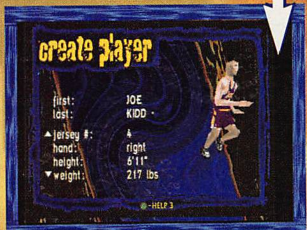
At first I didn't appreciate the pace much after playing *In The Zone 2*, since the pace seemed too slow. But after I played it for awhile I realized that the pace of *NBA Live '97* was very real to life. I'm not taking anything away from *Zone*, I love that game, but *Live* is what EA always intended; the real thing. One of the main distinctions between *Live '97* and *ITZone 2* is that, not only do you have to play to the players' strengths but you have to "play your game." Strategic knowledge became apparent to me when I was playing Charles "Bo" Outlaw, forward for the LA Clippers. I could tell that his knowledge of the game translated into the way his team played. It wasn't just reflexes and speed, but he set up his offense, got back on defense, double-teamed certain players, and utilized the clock in "2 for 1" situations. I got schooled. Thanks EA for the party, and thanks for *NBA Live '97*. ***JK***





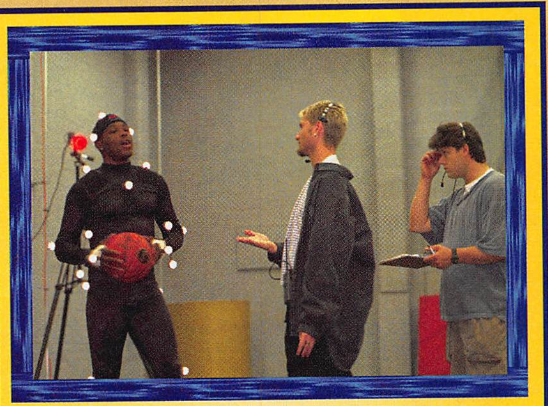


'Create player' and 'trade' options allow you to customize your favorite teams!

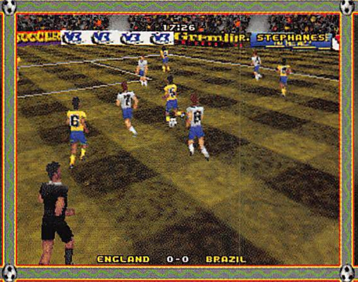


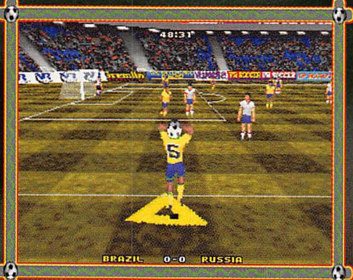






Thanks to volunteers like NBA star Mitch Ritchmond, EA made the game unbelievably life-like, using the latest Motion Capture Technology.


VR SOCCER '96

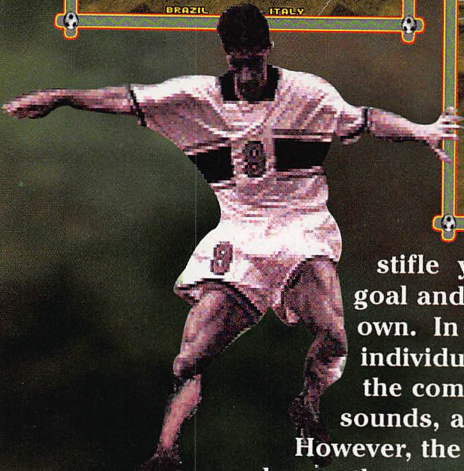





Let me take you back for a second. Back to the days of stiff, jarring player movement where just getting your team to get up and down the field for an entire period was a major accomplishment. Remember every player being the same speed? Remember Looney Toons and Otter Pops? Well, for all of you dedicated gamers who did the time, who persevered through the agony and never gave up hope, your days of mindless running and kicking a flat ball on a flat background are over.

Thanks to Gremlin, and the implementation of technology like real-time 3D and Interactive Motion, we now have smooth, time-balanced game play brought to the fields of soccer. Yes, you now have a ball that flies through the air in sync with the Law of Gravity. Head fakes that'll actually leave the computer player in the dust. Slide tackles that stifle your opponent's shot on goal and initiates an attack of your own. In addition to the graphics, *VR Soccer* has full rosters with individual player ratings listed by category. One hang-up I did have was that aside from the commentary, it seemed as if the game was on mute – no dribbling sounds, no kicking sounds, and not much of a crowd – which did detract from my ability to follow the action. However, the game is presented in an exciting 360-degree perspective, and at any time you can change the camera view without having to pause the game. This innovation really enhanced my ability to follow the ball and the flow of the game. As for the challenge of it all, you don't need to be a soccer expert to win, but it helps to learn strategy for continued success. ***JK***



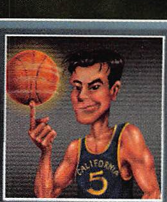



GAMEFAN SPORTS

R REVIEW

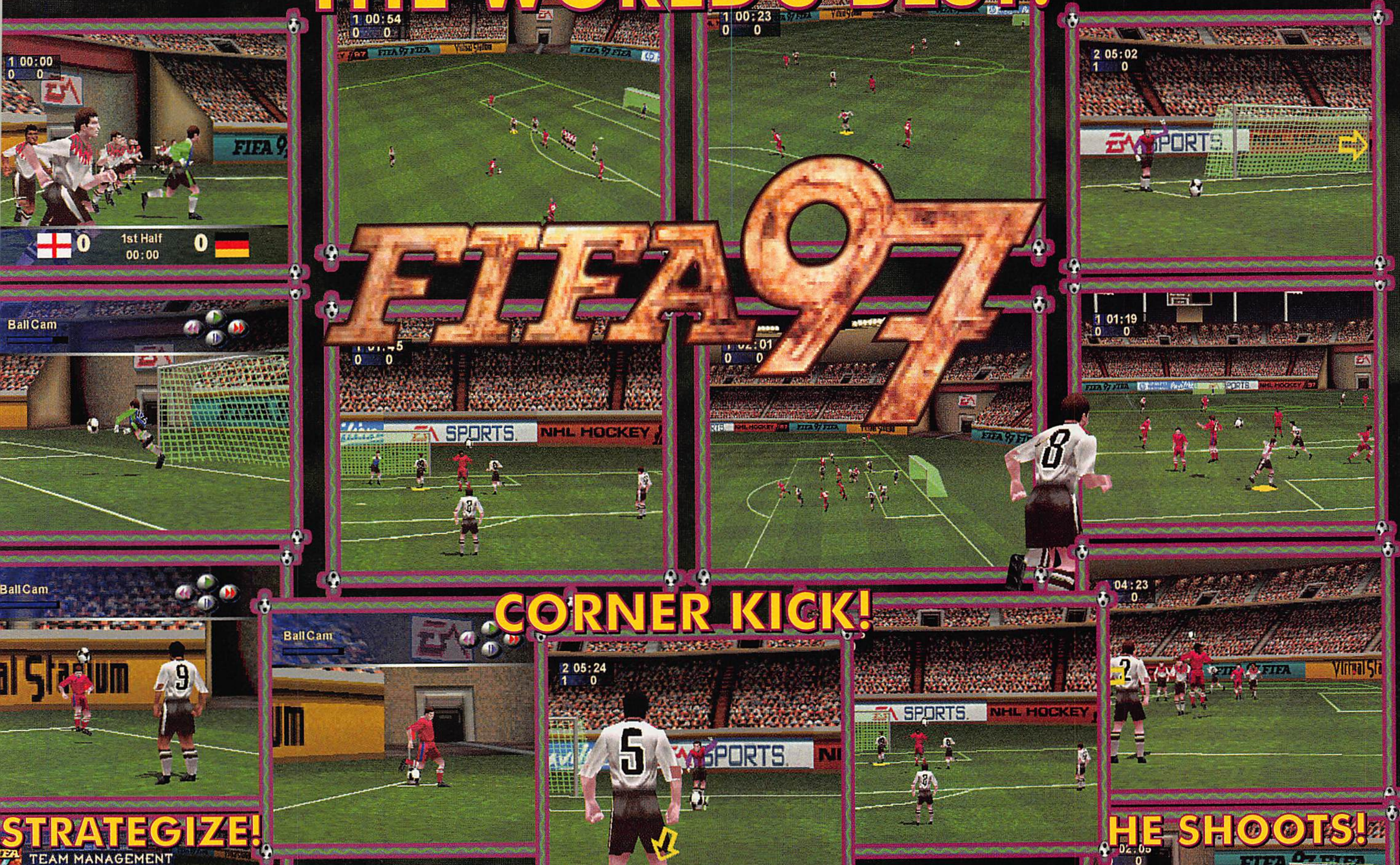
SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - GREMLIN	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - VR SPORTS	DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER



JOE KIDD
Dribbling with your feet?

THE WORLD'S BEST!

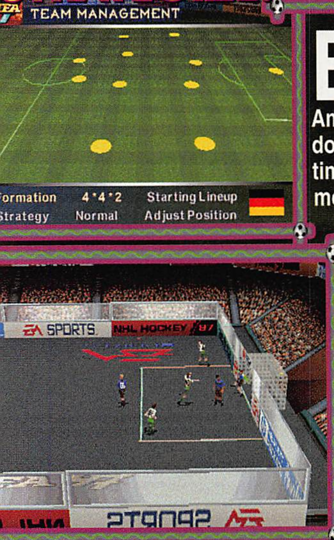


FIFA 97

CORNER KICK!

STRATEGIZE!

HE SHOOTS!





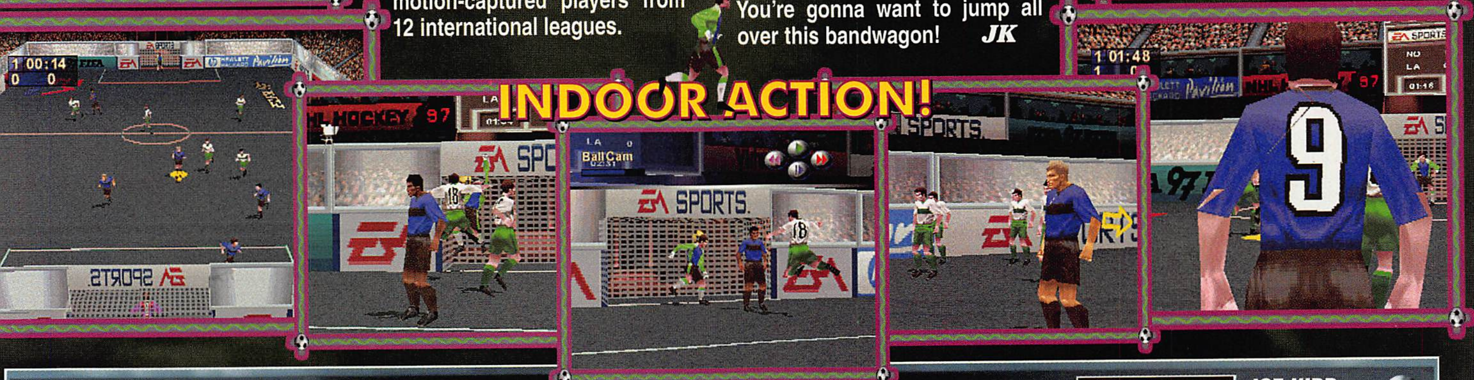
Even though soccer just hasn't quite cracked the top sports echelon in America in terms of fan popularity, it has dominated internationally for quite some time. EA caught on quickly to the world's most popular sport, and delved into just what makes this tumultuous competition a sport worth dying for.

You can always tell an EA title by the realism produced by their relentless pursuit of perfection. *FIFA* has not only reigned as the top selling soccer title in America but has flexed its muscle to number one worldwide as well. To facilitate its international appeal, *FIFA* is playable in Spanish, German, French, Italian and Svenska! It includes over 4200 real life, motion-captured players from 12 international leagues.

EA has strived to make dramatic improvements from their last version most notably in their Motion Blended graphics. FIFA offers 8 distinct camera angles including a shoulder and ball cam! You may opt to play on the traditional outdoor field, or the faster paced, astro-turfed, wall-ball of indoor soccer if you are compelled.

I felt as if I were in the World Championships with the interplay of the international commentary, as well as the unmistakable cheers from a real soccer crowd. Even the music received many compliments from co-workers, who couldn't believe I was simply scrolling down the options. This title will make soccer fans out of people who don't even like sports. You're gonna want to jump all over this bandwagon! ***JK***

INDOOR ACTION!



GAMEFAN SPORTS

REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - EA CANADA

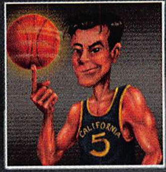
PUBLISHER - EA

FORMAT - CD

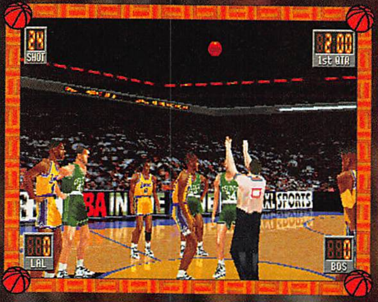
\# OF PLAYERS - 1 - 8

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER



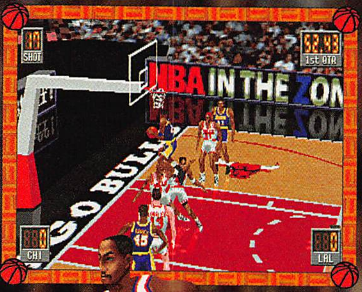
JOE KIDD
Soccer the way it oughta' be.



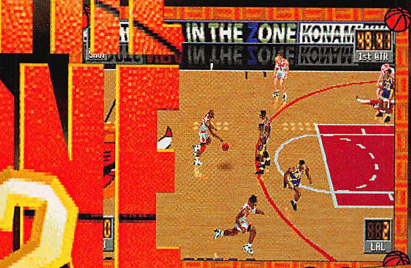


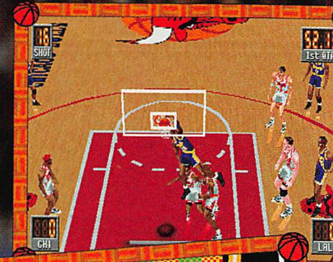








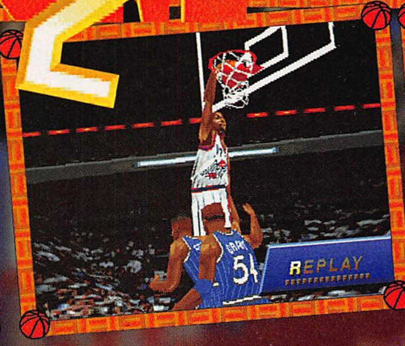




IN THE ZONE 2

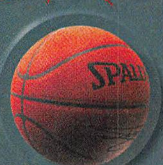








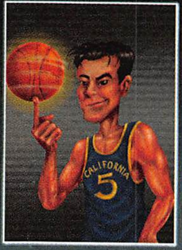
GAMEFAN SPORTS



REVIEW

PlayStation

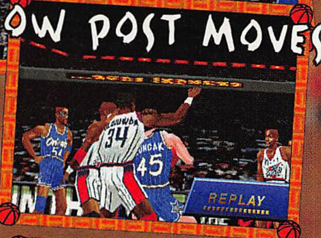
DEVELOPER - KONAMI
PUBLISHER - KONAMI
FORMAT - CD
OF PLAYERS - 1-2
DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
AVAILABLE - DECEMBER



JOE KIDD
The best basketball game ever? You make the call.

It's finally here. This is the game I've been looking forward to, ever since I experienced the preview version. If you read the preview, I had already proclaimed *ITZone 2* the "best basketball game ever to grace the shelves of retailers everywhere." You won't regret adding this title to your library collection. *ITZone 2* has that combination of great, detailed graphics with smooth, fast-paced gameplay seldom found in sports titles. In every other case, you either have decent graphics with slow, choppy play or decent play with unintelligible graphics. Aside from the random backcourt violation, and the impenetrable double teams, the play of *ITZone 2* is pure joy. I haven't played a season yet, but the playoffs get more and more heated as you get closer to the NBA Finals. I can't get enough of *ITZone 2*, and I'm sure I will start a season soon.

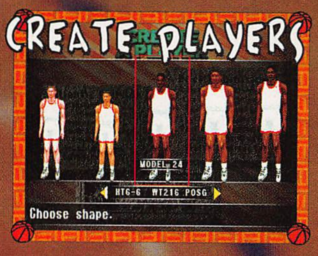
The Trade Player option is particularly effective with the way free agency is these days, and players moving constantly to other teams. The trade option enables you to keep all rosters current and updated. Of course, you can always defer to the Create Player mode, which allows you to just add an actual basketball-dunking figment of your own imagination! Each player can execute their own signature moves at your command; whether it's a spin move to the baseline or a killer crossover. You know how a lot of QB's wish they were linebackers? Well, most guards wish they could block shots. Shot blocking is an art form which, when executed in a timely manner, is oh-so-satisfying. Speaking of satisfying, try this one: When you see a teammate of yours going toward the basket, you make that eye contact and send it, baby. The alley oop'll bring tears to your eyes. On offense you can have picks set for you, and on defense you can opt for the double team. The low post moves allow you to take advantage of mismatches with the fadeaway jumper or a strong take to the hoop. Whichever option you decide, or if you just choose to jump it up exhibition style, you're gonna hit nuttin' but net with *In The Zone 2*. **JK**



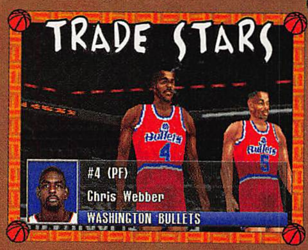














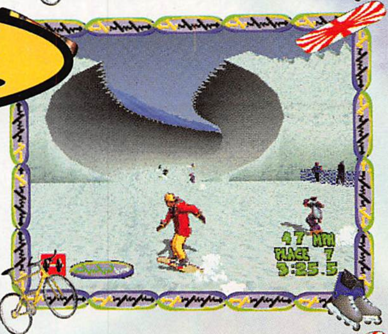






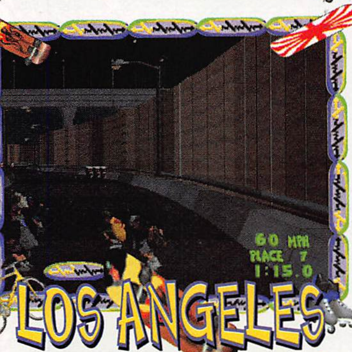
2 XTREME





The *Extreme* games are back! Last year, the first installment went on to become the best selling Sony produced title worldwide. That year behind us, there should be some major improvements in *2 Extreme*, right? Uh huh, well, anyway, on with the review.

Yeah, you guessed it, I'm less than enthusiastic about this one, as a sequel. You really can't blame me, I mean this game was pretty cool a year ago, but it should have been that much better this year. The fundamentals are still intact: You maneuver one of four "extreme" vehicles through 3D courses, all over the world, against a cast of similarly equipped opponents. Your goal is, naturally, to win the races, and along the way perform tricks for bonus points and cash. These tricks involve pressing and holding a combination of buttons once you've caught some good air (by hitting ramps or jumping off hill tops). You can also punch and kick your foes, and pass through multi-colored gates that award power-ups like increased jumping power. O.K., so the power-ups and dedicated tricks are cool, I can appreciate that, but read-on to discover the basis of my dis-enchantment.







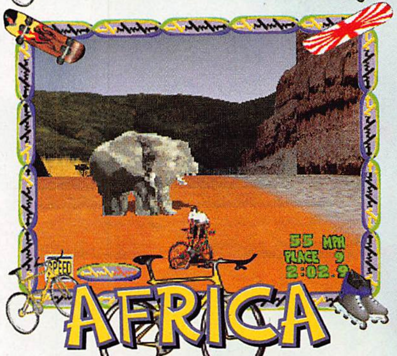






Why didn't Sony upgrade the graphics, even just a little? The texture-mapped polygonal courses are colorful and smooth, making a case for the old,"If it 'aint broke, bla, bla" rule, but this is supposed to be a sequel! People were walking by me asking why I was playing such an old game, and I'm like,"Er...it's *Extreme Games 2*, you know, the new one" and dismayed eyebrows were raised. I still had a gas playing *2 Extreme,* but I've been here. This is more of an extension than a sequel. There's four events (with three strikingly similar courses each), including roller-blading, skate-boarding, mountain biking, and snowboarding. The first three vehicles look, feel, and control almost exactly like the first *Extreme* : Good, not great, and very twitchy. The snowboarding is the same, with really rough play-mechanics (your movement is so dictated by the screen movement), but feature manageable controls and great speed.

If you're among the crowd who loved the first one, I suppose *2 Extreme* is just a little better so you'll definitely like it and if you're new to *Extreme* games, this is a better entry point than the first. Personally, I'm into progress, and in one year this series has little to show in comparison to say, *Wipeout XL*, *Re-Loaded* and other such PS fare that has seen blazing progress. In the end of course, it's your call. I'll say this; If you crave more of what made *Extreme* the mega hit it became then get in line, *2 Extreme* will surely satisfy your need for speed. -***JS***



GAMEFAN SPORTS

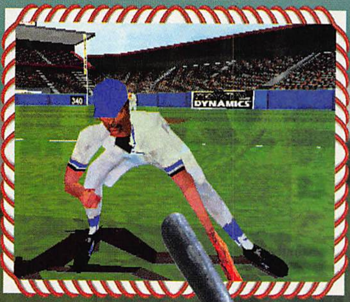
R REVIEW

PlayStation

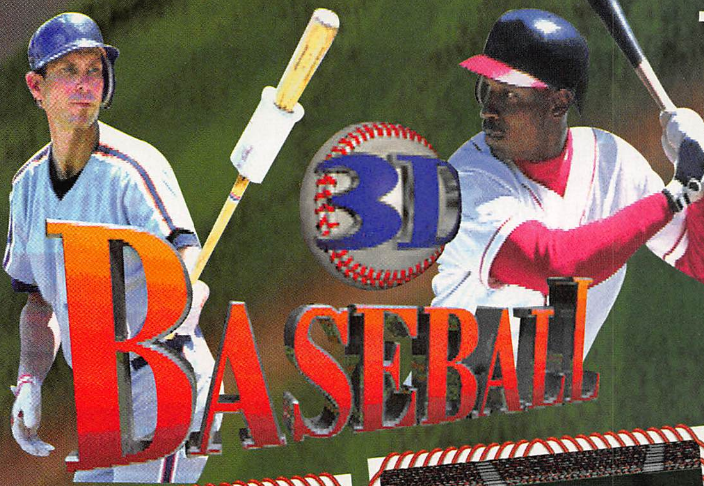
DEVELOPER - SONY	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - SONY	DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW



JACQUES STRAP X-TREME SIMILARI-TIES...



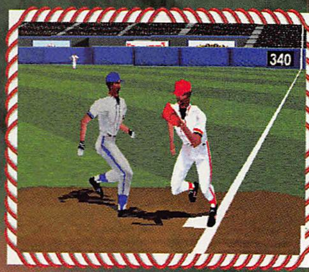


There used to be two different kinds of baseball games; good ones and bad ones. Now, with more good ones rather than the latter, a new division has come to pass; easy to play and ones you have to work at. *3D Baseball* is definitely one you have to work at. Like anything, if you don't have immediate success, it's easy to get frustrated. Like when the Orioles ran up a 14-0 4th inning lead on my American All-Star team.

Now, I could just be really sad at this game and this may be an isolated incident; I'll give you that. But I believe this game is really aimed not only toward the baseball enthusiast, but more so toward the purist. You don't get away with anything, just because it's a video game – rather, if it couldn't happen in the ballpark, chances are, it's not going to happen here. It's just what I needed – a baseball game that was willing to teach me the fundamentals, and assert discipline to a Mark McGwire wannabe, who camps out in the homerun derby of his demo disk for 3 hours, thinking he's all that, smacking 14 out of 20 pitches over the fence. *3D Baseball* put me in my place, showing me I'm nothing but a hatchling in a dreamworld farm system.

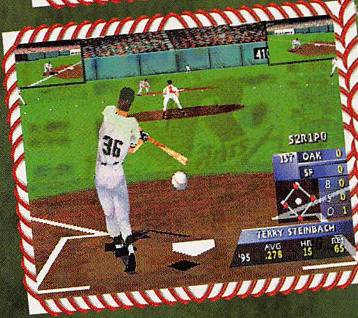
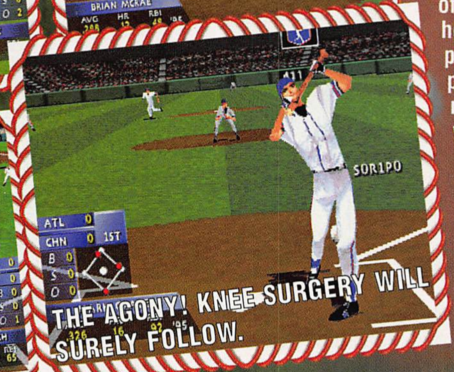
Even though I haven't mastered the game yet, I truly do appreciate it. The fielding is great with shortstops initiating the double play by flipping the ball to 2nd, or else leaving their skin on the field, sacrificing themselves for the team. Batting is a major challenge, because each players swing is unique, disallowing you to develop a rhythm transferrable to all batters; but you gotta love their signature waggles. As a pitcher, you don't just throw the ball, but you have close-ups of each man on base should he get any crazy ideas of stealing. *3D* chose Van Earl as their play-by-play voice, bringing character to the game. Although the commentary was somewhat basic, a feature I really enjoyed was the different individual player stats and trivia that came up with each at bat. True baseball fans will definitely enjoy this one. ***JK***

SAFE AT FIRST

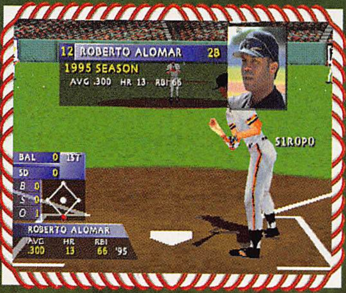


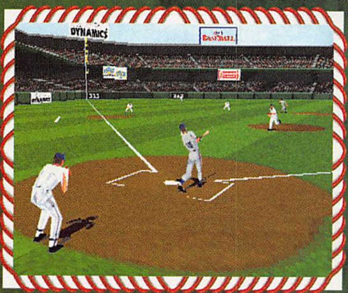
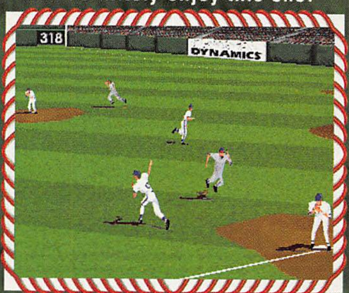




THE AGONY! KNEE SURGERY WILL SURELY FOLLOW.




GAMEFAN SPORTS

R REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - CRYSTAL DYNAMICS

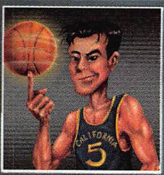
PUBLISHER - CRYSTAL DYNAMICS

FORMAT - CD

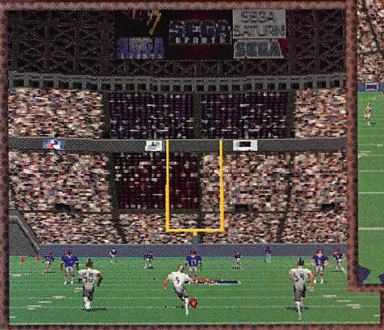
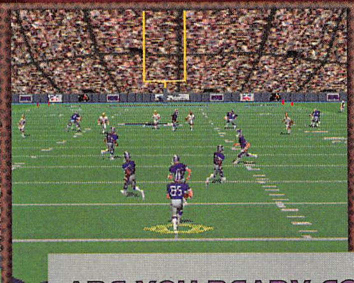
\# OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER



JOE KIDD
Amazingly realistic!



ARE YOU READY FOR SOME FOOTBALL?

NFL '97

ALL 30 NFL TEAMS!



HOMEFIELD ADVANTAGE



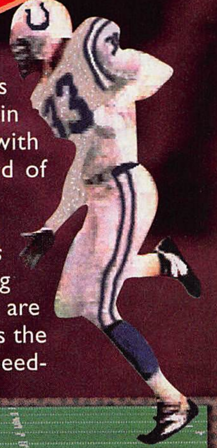
CREATE YOUR OWN PLAYS!



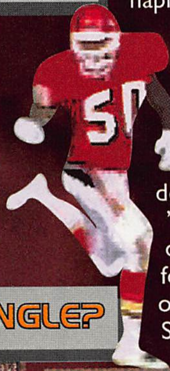
WHAT'S YOUR ANGLE?

I had such high hopes! First Sega loved me with *World Series 2*. Then came the bliss of *World Wide Soccer 2*. Their football must be hot! It's just gotta be! *Madden* is goin' down! Well…no. *Madden '97* doesn't have a worry in the world, but Sega should be taking a long look at *NFL '97* – the one glaring flaw in their fall sports lineup.

It can't be that bad, right? For starters, the 3D engine is way below average. It can't touch *Madden*, and doesn't go anywhere near *QB Club*. The frame rate, at around 20 fps, barely gets the job done. There's way too much polygon break-up down field, and the crowd textures become increasingly puke-like the closer you get to 'em. Sure, the pixelization is inherent of the Saturn hardware, but we've seen it so much smoother in other games. Finally, the players are low-detail traditional sprites with very little emotion or supplementary animation to give 'em any kind of football attitude whatsoever.

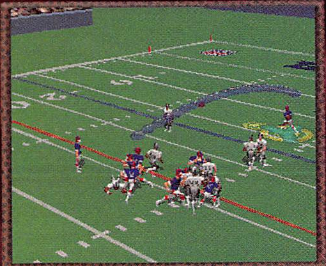


NFL players and teams are here; numbered jerseys, season play, and the intro and highlight screens show some truly wicked plays. The right NFL feel *is* here. Once you step on the field, though, you'd never know it. You're just not getting the fundamental gameplay ease that should flow in a good football game. Passing plays are straight outta *Madden* and *QB Club*: Your receivers are assigned X, Y, or Z and you press the according button to get it to them. Easy enough. Running's fine too, with unlimited speed-bursts, hurdles, and straight-arms to plow through opponents. So what's the problem? Well, the combination of low-grade player animation and chunky graphics seem to noticeably off-set the play-mechanics. The controls are fine, but moving the players is a twitchy, haphazard experience. I'm a gamer, you're a gamer, and we both know that feeling you get when the whole game just ain't doin' it for you. *NFL '97* put me there.




Before I go (and because I've been merciless!), I have to compliment Sega on the inclusion of the Play Edit feature. You can develop over a dozen of your own plays, save 'em, and play 'em. This doesn't change my opinion of the game, though. *NFL '97* is a poor football game. The overall quality of Sega's other sports games makes this point even clearer. Spend your dough on *Madden '97* and be happy. ***JS***






GAMEFAN SPORTS
R REVIEW



DEVELOPER - STI	# OF PLAYERS - 1-8
PUBLISHER - SEGA	DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER

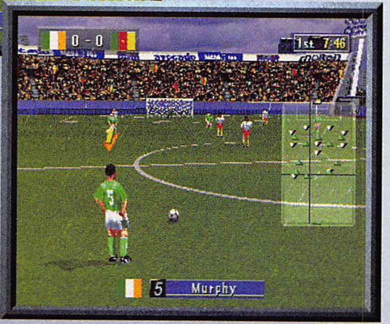


JACQUES STRAP
A little dissapointing



SEGA WORLDWIDE SOCCER '97









GAMEFAN SPORTS

REVIEW

SEGA SATURN

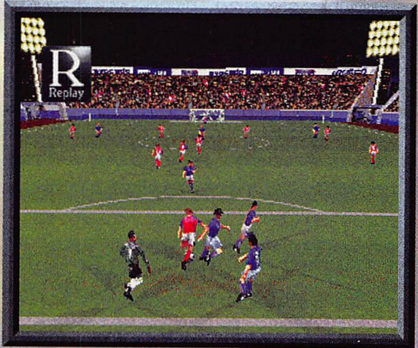
- DEVELOPER - SOJ
- PUBLISHER - SOA
- FORMAT - CD
- # OF PLAYERS - 1-4
- DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED
- AVAILABLE - NOW

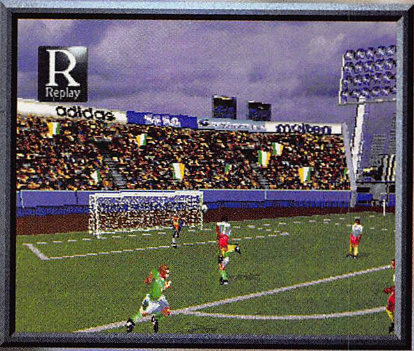


JACQUES STRAP
Sock it to me!

I've played a lot of soccer games since the first *World Wide Soccer*, but I still go back to it 'cause the gameplay's so good. I recognize, though, that this year's crop of soccer games are lookin' hot, putting the first *WWS* to shame. Well, Sega fixed everything in *'97*, upgrading the graphics tremendously and refining the gameplay to include the most realistic play mechanics soccer games have ever known.

One look at *WWS '97* will convince anyone that sports games have come a long way thanks to 32-bit technology. Point of fact: You've never, ever, seen animation this fluid in a soccer game. The perfectly motion-captured players animate with an unprecedented level of detail and realism. For example, as you plod your way up the field, a quick turn to shake an opponent doesn't merely move your player to one side. No, instead an entirely new animation sequence shows your player skillfully dribbling to his right or left to fake the challenger. The hot, 60 fps animation carries over into all aspects of the player movement, as well as the texture-mapped polygonal stadiums and fields. The final nail in the coffin in this drop-dead beauty would have to be the shadows cast by your players during night games. This is an indescribable graphical touch that you've really gotta see to fully comprehend.









Sorry guys, I was stuck on the graphics for a little longer than planned (they're *sooo* good), but frankly, the gameplay's just as cool. Like the first *WWS*, you can set up your controls and play using long shots, clearing shots, lobs, and chips on offense. On defense, you can stuff 'em with slide tackles and shoulder charges. For *'97*, Sega decided to go nuts on offense, with friggin' wicked moves like behind-the-back heel kicks, one timers, mid-field traps, and a host of dribbling and passing techniques. And like the first, the control is perfect. Moves like the heel kick require you to press up then down quickly followed by a button – no problem, right? Works every time, too. For once, it really feels like the gameplay and animation are working together, improving the play mechanics, instead of creating frustrating moments where you swear, "I pressed the freakin' button!"

There ya go. It looks great, plays perfectly, and, by the way, sounds good too, due to some great play-by-play and excellent rock and techno tunes. There's also loads of ways to play, with season modes like World League, exhibition games, and shoot-out and cup games. There's even a Player Edit mode where you can re-name players, adjust their attributes (using a neato *Ridge Racer*-type stats diagram), and save 'em and play 'em in a game. Rounding out the stat frenzy are the actual in-game formations, which are more strategy-intensive for *'97*.

This is the best soccer game ever made, for any system. If you like soccer, buy *World Wide Soccer '97* now and you won't be disappointed. Trust me, get this game now!!

JS

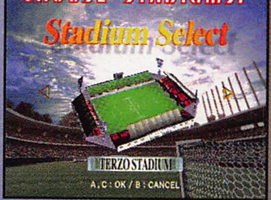
CUSTOMIZE PLAYERS!!



CHANGE ENVIRONMENTS!



CHOOSE STADIUMS!







Welcome, one and all, to the new Japan Now, the freakish lovechild of the old Japan Now and that Gen32 section. From this point on, Japan Now will be appearing each and every month, with all the newest news, previews, interviews, and game reports from our gaming brotherland across the Pacific. This month, we have a peek at some of the RPGs coming in the next few months, a review of Saturn **Langrisser III**, *and another six-page* **Final Fantasy VII** *report. First of all, we have an interview with the creator of* **Resident Evil**, *and the continuation of last month's GD-NET report, in which we visit with the fine folks at Quintet. All opinions, comments, questions and article ideas are welcome, c/o the Postmeister. -Takuhi*

Shinji Mikami: The Creator of Resident Evil

Interview: Kei Kuboki
Translated by Kei Kuboki and Casey Loe

GameFan (GF): *Resident Evil* [known as *Bio Hazard* in Japan and Europe] has such a different feel than most Capcom games. Can you tell us how this game came about?

Mr. Mikami (M): It was really a top down procedure. The company asked me to make a horror game, something scary that people would enjoy playing. We made a horror game for the 8-bit Famicom, called *Sweet Home*, which was licensed from a movie. The company wanted to create something with a similar flavor. That was the only instruction that we got from the company, so we were able to create this game more freely than usual.

When I sat down to plan this game, I was all by myself. I spent about six months planning and structuring the game, and then hired 10 more staff members to begin working on it. We had to spend a long time just trying various things out, because at that time, there wasn't the CG technology, and we were doing an original game completely from scratch. So, basically we've spent an entire year of planning and researching. When it was time to actually start developing the game, we added 20 to 30 more staff members, and towards the end we had a total of 50 people working on the project. We've had 18 people in the programming department alone. We could've made a couple of different teams out of our staff (laughs). The game took a total of 2 years and 3 months.



GF: So is *Resident Evil* a sequel to this *Sweet Home?*"

M: No, it is not a sequel. It does feel a little like *Sweet Home*. People who have played *Sweet Home* will no doubt say, "Oh, this is like *Sweet Home*," but we didn't want to make an exact copy or a sequel. I wanted to create something more sharp.

GF: Why did you decide to release it on PlayStation, and not Sega Saturn?

M: It was simply because, at the time, the PS seemed to be the most appropriate hardware, and the hardware most capable of expressing the image we wanted. That's all. There were no other reasons.

GF: Are there any plans to convert it to Saturn in the future?

M: There are no plans at the moment.

GF: Do you intend to release many more of this type of game in the future?

M: I'm certainly not stuck on this particular game engine, but I think that there will be a lot of games released in the future that have a similarly cinematic feel. I do intend to make many more games like this in the future, but I'm not saying that this is the only type of game that we will be making.

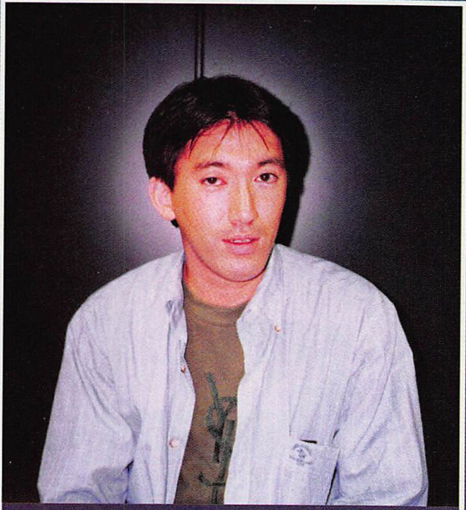
GF: Since you've mentioned cinema, are there any particular movies that influenced your creation of this game?

M: Did you know that (George) Romero made a zombie movie? It was called *Dome of the Dead*. I saw it as a Junior High School student, and the image is still burned into my brain. Of course, it was just a movie, and I couldn't do anything to try to recreate it as a game, but it made me daydream about living in a realistic world in which zombies appeared. Like, "What if it was me who was in that situation? Well, I'd do this, and I'd do that..." I've daydreamed like that since I was little and I thought, "Since this is a video game, wouldn't it be possible to recreate that?" Of course, no one wants to actually live in such a world, and get killed, but with a game it's possible to satisfy your imagination and feel like you're actually experiencing it.

GF: So, that's where your idea came from.

M: That's right. Actually, I came up with various other ideas, including a ghost story, but when I thought of making a game out of that zombie movie I saw when I was a kid, I knew I had it. I had confidence that this would be a great game because of that movie.

GF: *Resident Evil* was really popular in the US and Europe as well. When you were developing it, did you think at all about foreign markets?



With only two SNES titles (*Goof Troop* and *Aladdin*) under his belt, Mr. Mikami produced the critically and financial smash-hit, *Resident Evil*. The mysterious halo on this undoctored photograph reveals what Nick and I have believed all along... This man *is* the savior.

M: Well, actually no. I didn't think about the foreign market. And because of that, I've been told that the dialogue in the game was very strange (laughs). I've heard that a lot. I'll do it properly next time.

GF: We thought it was a bit odd, too. Was the voice recorded in America?

M: No, we recorded it in Japan.

GF: But, American voice actors, right?

M: Well, the voice actors were American, but the translator was Japanese, so people ended up thinking the dialogue was very unnatural. The other thing is that at first, the actors didn't



speak very clearly. The US version doesn't have subtitles on the screen, like the Japanese one does. So in the English version, if you miss hearing an important message, that's it. There's nothing you can do. To fix that, we asked the voice actors to speak very slowly and clearly, but that ended up being a negative itself. Since I'm Japanese, I didn't realize how strange it was for them to be speaking so slowly. I was disturbed when I finally noticed that much later.

GF: In an early press interview in Japanese publications, I thought I saw mention of many other weapons, and even kid zombies in earlier versions of the game. What changes were made between the original plan, and the final version?

M: I completely changed the scenario, and the whole perspective. At first, the game was going to have a 1st-person perspective, and be made completely out of polygons. There were a lot of weapons and items we planned to put in there as well, which gradually ended up being cut. As far as the kid zombies are concerned,



I just though that it was not right to use the kid zombies. I thought it was morally wrong to have such disturbing elements as blowing kids' heads off, even if they are zombies. So I cut them out of the final product.

GF: No one told you to remove it?

M: No, no one told me anything. I just didn't think people would like that. So naturally they won't be in *Resident Evil 2*, either.

GF: Is it true that it was the *Resident Evil* team who developed the *Goof Troop* game?

M: Umm... No, that was only me. There was another person who was with the *Resident Evil* team at the beginning, but now I'm the only one.

GF: What other games have you made?

M: Only *Aladdin* and *Goof Troop*. But I'm sure that none of those games affected *Bio Hazard* in any way, because I was the only one who worked on them. Actually, *Bio Hazard* is the very first game most of our staff worked on... About 70% of them. So this team was made by a very young staff. That a good thing and also a bad thing. That's one reason it was so difficult.



GF: Can you tell us about some of the difficulties you had making *Resident Evil*?

M: If I start talking about it I know I'll get depressed... (laughs) Well, the first problem was we couldn't even visualize the actual schedule. I was very worried about how we'd be able to graphically express the scenes I had drawn in my mind... Our first schedule was about 1-1/2 to 2 years, but once we started, we ended up spending an eternity just planning and running tests, much more than we had with other games. We had three major hurdles: No one had worked with the new 32-bit hardware, or 3D polygons. And since it was a totally original game, not a sequel or translation, we had to do everything from scratch. After stumbling on our tests for so long, members of the staff were starting to say, "Can this ever really be released as a product? Are we going to have to close the project and count it all as research?"



GF: And how many copies have you ended up selling?

M: As of today (September 15, 1996), we've sold just over 800,000 copies in Japan alone.

GF: Is *Resident Evil* Capcom's best-selling 32bit format title?

M: Yes. Worldwide, it's sold more than 1.5 million copies.

GF: Let me start asking *Resident Evil 2* questions. Will this be the end of the series?

M: Um, I can't say... (laughs) If it sells well, I'd like to release some more (laughs).

GF: Will Chris and Jill appear in part 2?

M: No.

GF: Can you tell us what happened to Chris, Berry, Rebecca, and Jill at the end of part 1? Did Wesker really died?

M: All of the *Resident Evil 1* characters are in the hospital, due to extreme fatigue. Whether Wesker is dead or alive is still unclear...

GF: Compared to the original, will *Resident Evil 2* emphasize puzzle elements, or action elements?

M: Ah, it'll be exactly the same as *Resident Evil 1*, with perhaps a bit more emphasis on the action.

GF: How about the length of the game?

M: It's about the same.

GF: Are there more than 2 playable characters?

M: No, just two.

GF: Since the backgrounds weren't polygons in *RE1*, did you think about using full polygon backgrounds in *RE2*?

M: No, not at all. Polygon backgrounds don't match what we're trying to do with *Resident Evil* at all. By using preset camera angles, we can control how things appear... If we made them with full polygons and a free-floating camera, the element of fear would be lost. As it is now, it's very easy for us to hide enemies behind corners and such. The control may be a little bit bad, but I think this is the best way to produce a true feeling of tension.

GF: Is there any part in the game in which you can interact with the background?

M: In that regard, *Resident Evil 2* is about the same as *Resident Evil 1*. I would like to make a game in which that were possible... but not for *Resident Evil*.

GF: Will you increase the number of zombies, and the amount of weapons and ammo?

M: Yes, we plan to add more of both.

GF: Do you use Motion Capture for the character movement?

M: No, we didn't use it for *RE2*. We tried to use it for *RE1*, but it wasn't that great. The technology was too new at that time. We could create better movement with our own designers. We can work faster that way, so for *RE* and *RE2*, we're still doing it by hand.

GF: To what do you attribute *Resident Evil*'s phenomenal sales?

M: This is really the first game in which people can feel like a character in a horror movie, and experience the feeling of actually being in danger. I think that, and the high quality graphics and sound are probably the reasons people buy *Bio Hazard*, more so than the actual gameplay. But this is only half of the reason. The other half is just luck (laughs).

GF: What kind of feedback did you get from users?

M: People thought it had a great element of fear. The minus side was the control and the scenario, and the bad English dialogue. These will all be improved in the sequel.

GF: I always ask this, but what are your favorite games?

M: I personally like *Derby Stallion* (Ascii's horse racing strategy game). I used to love the original arcade *Gradius*, too. Now I like *Mario*, *Zelda*, *Final Fantasy*, *Dragon Quest*... Really, all the big titles.

GF: Since you've mentioned *Mario* and *Zelda*, what do you think about the N64?

M: I want them to release more games (laughs).

GF: Any possibility you'll make games on N64?

M: I would love to!

GF: Thank you very much!



Update!

In an interview with Japanese magazine Famicom Tsushin, Capcom Development Chief Yoshiki Okamoto revealed some of their future (and past) plans for the *Bio Hazard* series.

•Before Capcom began developing *Bio Hazard 2*, they began production on *Bio Hazard Dash*," a semi-sequel to *Bio Hazard*. It takes place a few years after *Bio Hazard*, when Chris and Jill go to investigate a number of zombified plants that are sighted in the area of *Bio Hazard*'s mansion. While using basically the same environments (updated with cracks and cobwebs), *Dash* would have had a few new locations, different enemies, and new weapons. Unfortunately, production was stopped when Capcom decided to make *Bio Hazard 2* instead.

•*Bio Hazard* for Windows '95 has been confirmed, and will feature weapons and costumes that did not appear in the PlayStation original.

•Is *Bio Hazard* coming for Saturn? Capcom is still in the process of deciding that, revealed Mr. Okamoto, but expressed hope that Saturn owners would get their own version. If a Saturn version was to be made, it would include some new elements (like the Windows '95 one)... Here's hoping they make that *Bio Hazard Dash* on the Saturn!

We should have our first full *Resident Evil 2* layout within a month or two... I'm looking forward to it as much as you are. -Takuhi

PlayStation

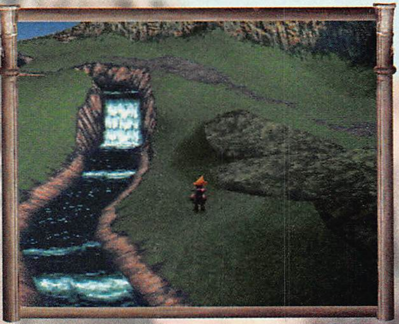
Developer: Square

Publisher: Square

Available: 01/31/97

Takuhi



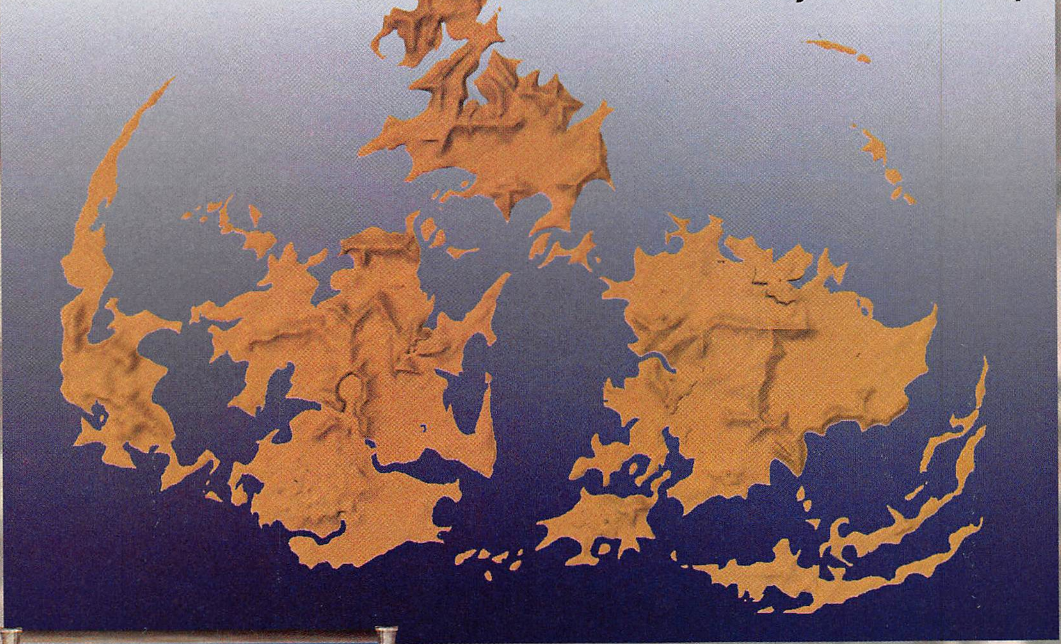




I think I'll spare you guys the usual rambling diatribe that tends to accompany these *Final Fantasy VII* updates, as we have only six pages with which to catch you up on three months of *Final Fantasy* development. And a lot's been happening in those 3 months... Square's filled in just about all of the blanks, and has now fully shown and explained the game's map system, the new battle systems, and the basic storyline. The game's cast has been rounded out with three more heroes, and the villainous staff of Shinra has finally been introduced. Oh, and that piece of art on the left is the first piece of *FFVII* to be released by Yoshitaka Amano, the man who's been the officially *Final Fantasy* artist from day one.

Perhaps more importantly, there's the new release information: January 31st, 3 CDs, for 6800 yen. The American translation process has already begun (unusual for an unfinished game), and we should have our version only a few excruciatingly painful months later than the Japanese will. Of course, if you want to break down and taunt yourself, you can buy *Tobal No. 1*, packed with the *Final Fantasy VII* demo. And perhaps when next we speak, beloved comrades, I'll be reviewing the final... *T*

Unveiled at Last: The Final Fantasy VII World Map

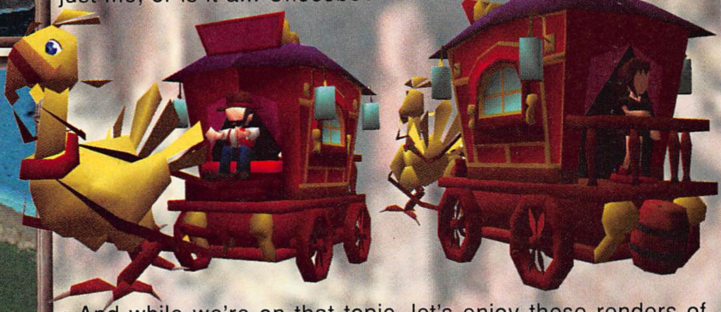






As expected, *Final Fantasy VII* will feature a completely polygon-rendered 3D overhead map. This impressive view features unprecedented animation (note the actual waxing and waning of the tides, and the motion of the rivers), as well as the option for the player to switch between overhead and 1st-person perspectives.

The main *Final Fantasy* world map is above... As is typical of *Final Fantasy* games, it has lots of oceans and tons of tiny islands. But what's with that northernmost continent. Is it just me, or is it a... Chocobo?



• And while we're on that topic, let's enjoy these renders of Chocobo-drawn carriages. Hmmm... Evidently they're quite popular with the Amish...

Final Fantasy VII: The Prelude



We've probably all seen the *Final Fantasy VII* demo by now, in which Shinra-soldier-turned-mercenary Cloud works with the leader of terrorist organization Barret (and Aeris, a florist who has nothing to do with anything) to blow up one of the evil Shinra corporation's environmentally destructive "Makoro" power reactors.

This month's batch of shots tell the story leading up to that point, in which Cloud is propositioned by Tifa, bartendress and childhood friend, to work with Avalanche, of which she, evidently, is a member.

Unable to turn Tifa down, Cloud joins Barret and begins planning their sabotage...



The story of what comes next is evidently told in the demo disc... But what comes after that?

In the next scene, Cloud, having been paid for his part in the crime, returns to Tifa's. Together, they watch as President Shinra reads a statement about the Makoro's destruction. He announces that Avalanche has claimed credit for the terrorist attack, and intends to continue their dastardly deeds. But the people of Midgar need not worry, as Shinra will respond to their terrorism by bringing in more soldiers to wipe out the members of Avalanche.



(continued next page)

Previews of Upcoming Scenes

(story continued)



The prospect of having to fight an army of Shinra soldiers scares Tifa... As she leaves, she begs you to join Avalanche and help protect her. Although you have the option to tell Cloud to refuse on the grounds that he "hates Barret," it seems that this is where your true quest is likely to begin.



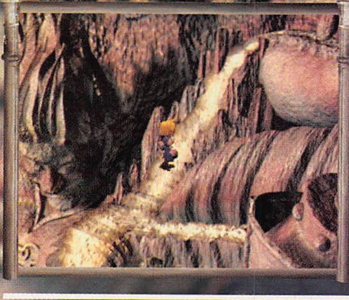
We don't know how much later this takes place, but it could be directly after the demo disc... In this scene, Barret, Tifa, and Cloud are escaping a sabotaged Makoro, when they run into none other than President Shinra himself... *(continued on facing page)*



Uutai Ruins







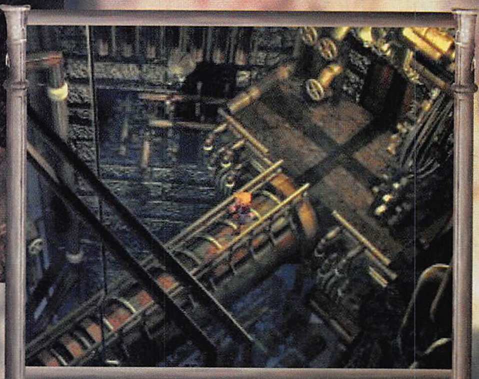






Nible Mountains

Midgar's is not the only Makoro in *FFVII*... Older, prototype Makoros rest here, in the hearts of the Nible and Korel Mountains.

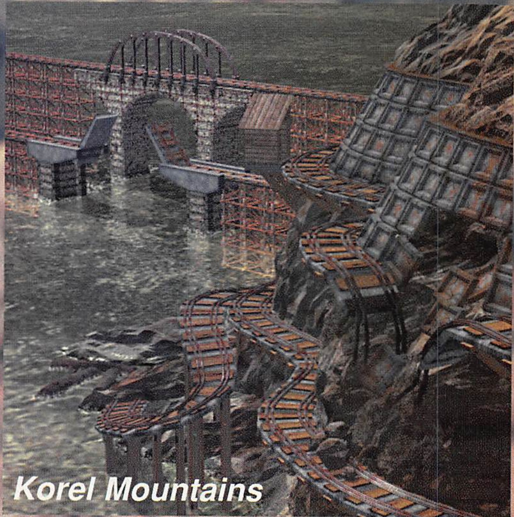




Vincent

Despite Vincent's proper, learned appearance, this mysterious man casts a dark shadow. His past connections with Shinra are deep, but unclear. Although his body may look fragile, it hides some truly ferocious power... The shots below are from Vincent's secret library.





Korel Mountains





Midgar: Sector 6



The "Wall Market"





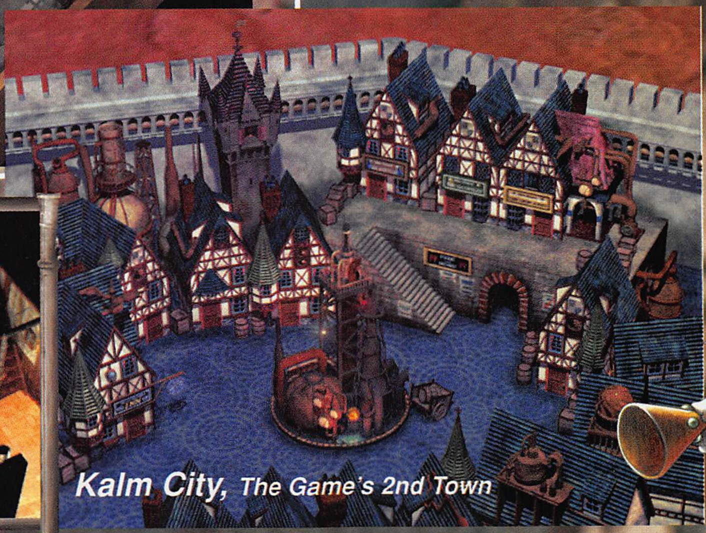
After he trades a few cold pleasantries with his former employee (Cloud), and a few insults with Barret, the heroes are warped away (?) and captured by Shinra!



The next string of shots show the introduction of Red-XIII, a monster (Shinra's pet?) that stuns the Avalanche members with his eloquent speech. Is he the key to their escape? What's Aeris doing here? We'll find out... eventually.





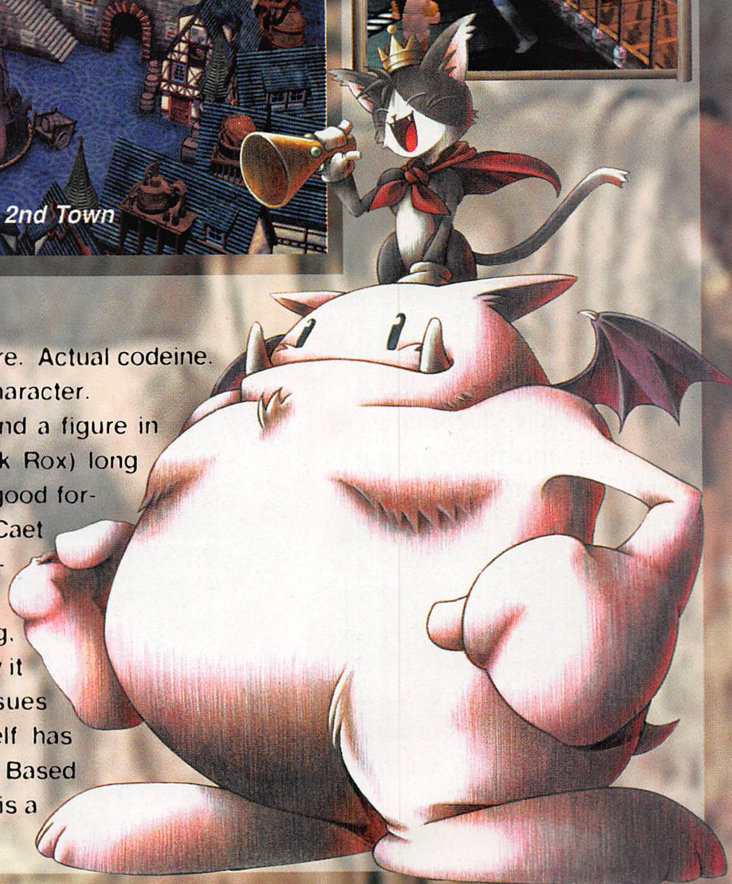


Kalm City, The Game's 2nd Town

Caet Sith

In Japan, you can buy pain-killers with codeine at any drug store. Actual codeine. I think that goes a long away towards explaining this particular character.

Caet Sith has been a call spell in previous *Final Fantasys*, and a figure in Welsh mythology (according to our fanky mythologitician, Nick Rox) long before that... It's a cat-like house spirit that traditionally brings good fortune, to your household, or something. Anyway, this particular Caet Sith (a male, judging from his crude manner of speech) isn't exactly bringing good fortune to anyone. He's taken a giant Moogle-shaped stuffed animal (I'm not even kidding, check out the zipper!), and breathed life into it. Now it lives to follow the commands Caet Sith issues through his megaphone. Caet Sith himself has attacks similar to those of *FFIII/VI*'s Setzer... Based on roulette, dice, and the like. And yes, this is a controllable party-character.













New Battle Systems

Final Fantasy V had the Class Change System, *Final Fantasy VI* had the Accessory System, and *Final Fantasy VII* has... The Materia System.

Yup, that's **Materia**, not Material. It's a rock – a gem, actually – that's the solid crystallization of the energy that is mined and processed by the Makoro reactors. There are five different types of Materia, and hundreds of different kinds. Each can be applied to any weapon or accessory, although the number of Materias that can be supported varies depending on the weapon.

There are five different kinds of Materia:

Magic Materia allows your characters to use magic. Equip their weapon with a Flame Materia, for example, and that character can use the whole array of Fire spells.

Command Materia gives your character new commands that are selectable in battles, including many from *FF 4-6*. Among them are Steal, Throw, Transform, Summon, and various classes of magic.

Independent Materia raise the stats of your character, or can give them more HP or MP, experience bonuses, protection vs. various enemies and spells, etc.

Support Materia synchronize with other Materia to have powerful combined effects. For example, Steal is attainable through one command Materia, but by mixing it with a certain Support Materia, you'll gain the ability to steal while you deliver normal attacks.

Summon Materia allow you to cast call spells.

You can accumulate unlimited amounts of Materia, and change the ones you have equipped in the regular menu screen. It doesn't sound terribly unlike *Final Fantasy VI*'s accessory system, actually... The only twist is that they can also allow magics, and are tied in with your weapons. It should be quite interesting to see how this effects the game's overall strategy.

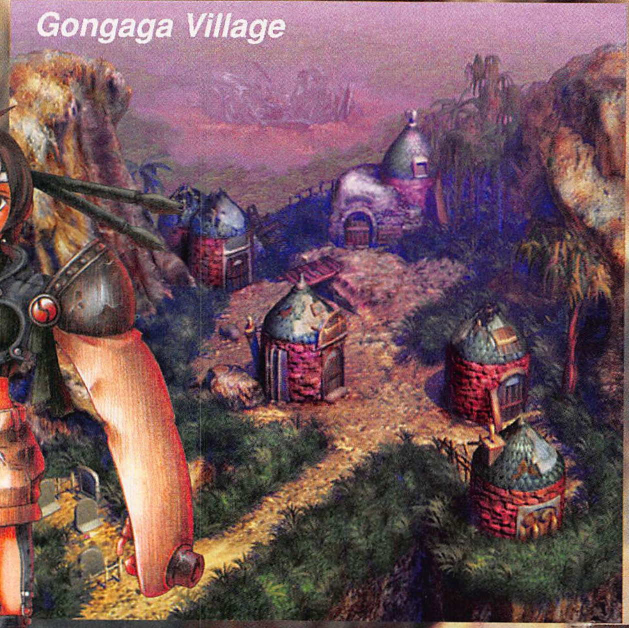


Equipping Materia: It's the colored balls in the upper right.



Below: Buying Materia in a shop. You can also get it in battles.





Gongaga Village







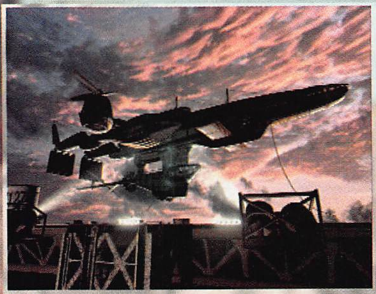
Yufi

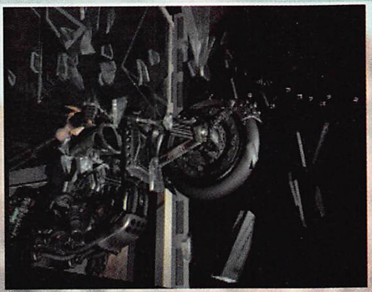
Yufi Kisaragi is from a very traditional, proper Ninja family. Although she has learned their technique well, her appearance suggests a distinct lack of respect for her family's traditional customs. Selfish, impetuous, and thoughtless, she forces Cloud's party to aid her on her quest to find a certain item. Although her personality is a problem, in times of combat you can always rely on Yufi's great skill with her giant shuriken.

Barrier Gauges Explained

Remember those little Barrier gauges to the right of the characters' names? Well, their purpose has finally been revealed: When protection spells are cast on you, the bars show the duration of their effects. One is magical protection, one is physical protection. Never again will you be caught unawares when a spell's effect fades. Okay, that's not so exciting, but definitely useful.





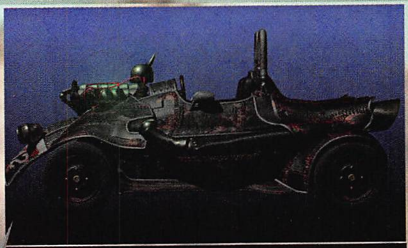


New FMV Scenes!

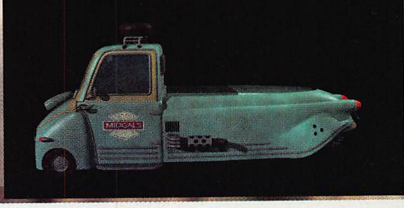




Clearly, someone at Square just loves cars, 'cause they keep rendering some very weird vehicles. The newest crop of vehicles from the Shinra Electric Company are pictured to the right.





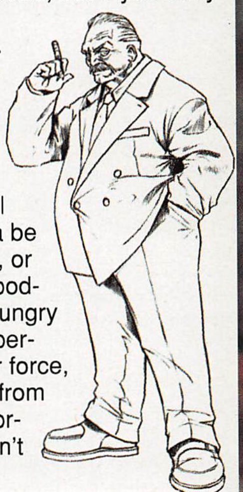




No reason for these renders to be here, I'm just trying to kill that last little spot of unused space..

The Shinra Company: FFVII's Impressive Cast of Villains Finally Revealed

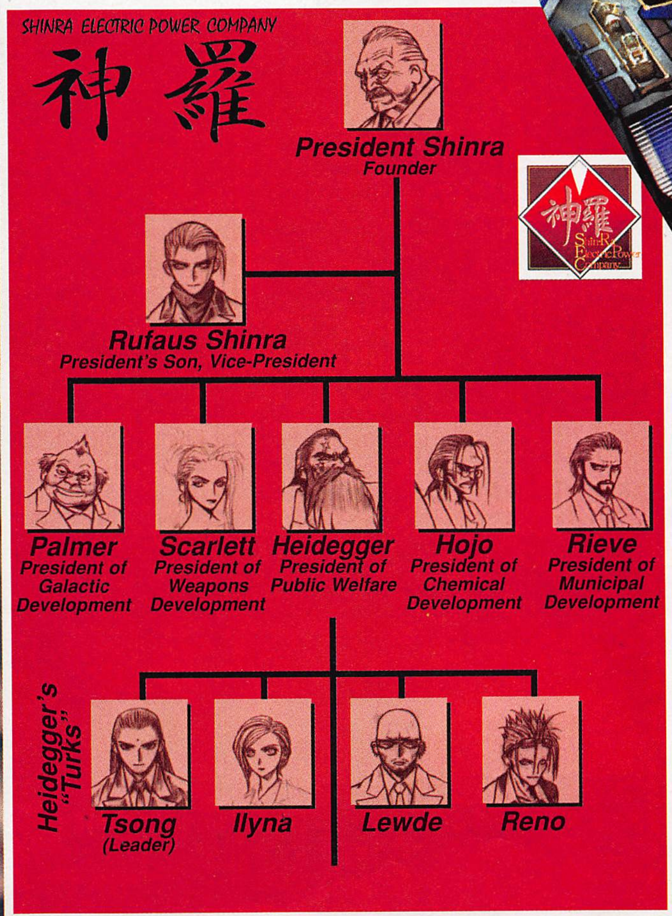
神羅 Shin-Ra Electric Power Company



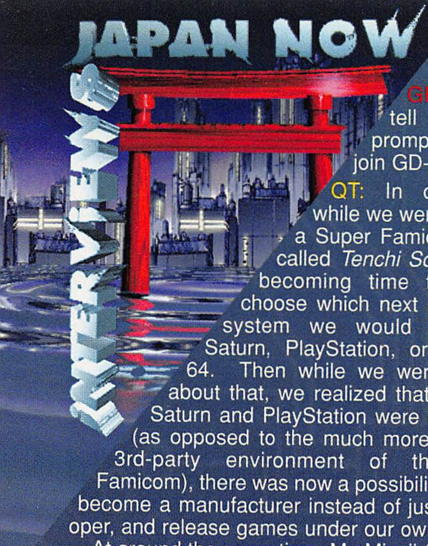
Okay, let's start with that picture in the lower-right hand corner. How about THAT, eh? Those are villains... The shotgun-wielding, futuristic gang clothes-wearing son of the president and founder of the Shinra company, leading the "Turks," Shinra's own "peace-keeping" force, out to make some, ya know, *Peace*... Now, say what you will about new *FFVII* Character Designer Tetsuya Nomura, but if you deny that these are the coolest villains ever to grace a Square title, well, I just have to pity you. Anyway, that's the entire corporate hierarchy of Shinra in the lower left... Those are our translations, so they could be quite different in the final. Will President Shinra be the main villain, or will it be his bloodthirsty, power-hungry son Rufus? Or perhaps some darker force, controlling Shinra from far beyond their corporate ladder? Can't wait to find out!











Quintet

For Part II of our GD-Net Special Report, we've been granted an interview with Quintet, one of the most well-known and well-respected of GD-Net's founders. Their credits include the **Actraiser series, Illusion of Gaia, and RoboTrek.**

Interviewer: Kei Kuboki Translated by Kei Kuboki and Casey Loe

GDNET
GAME DESIGNERS NETWORK

GF: Please tell us: What prompted you to join GD-NET?

QT: In our case, while we were finishing a Super Famicom game called *Tenchi Sozo*, it was becoming time for us to choose which next generation system we would work on; Saturn, PlayStation, or Nintendo 64. Then while we were thinking about that, we realized that as far as Saturn and PlayStation were concerned (as opposed to the much more restricted 3rd-party environment of the Super Famicom), there was now a possibility for us to become a manufacturer instead of just a developer, and release games under our own label.

At around the same time, Mr. Miyaji (President, Game Arts and ESP) contacted us and we had long talk. He explained that GD-NET had an original system to eliminate most of the problems associated with becoming a publisher. Therefore, we expressed our intention to join. Then it took us few months to announce this.

One example of the type of problems that GD-NET will be able to solve is that since Quintet's been working under Enix as a subcontractor, we don't have any divisions for Sales or Marketing... We've heard from lots of companies who have tried to become makers, and they usually tell of conflict between the sales and development divisions. But with GD-NET's system, the creators don't have to change at all, and all the sales, marketing, and advertising is handled by a company called ESP. So, we said "Oh, that's great!" People might say that we're not a true manufacturer, but we still get a lot of respect as a game maker, and since we'd release our games under the Quintet label, our name will be distinguished. That was a great opportunity for us.

GF: What was the reaction from Enix and other companies about this matter?

QT: We had a conversation with people from Enix right when we decided we really wanted to join GD-NET. Enix said that since Quintet is an independent company that has no financial investment from Enix, it's all up to us, but that they hoped we would consider our long relationship until now. I think they realized that the time had come.

GF: Will you be working on Enix games as well?

QT: Yes. We are excited about our opportunity to become a maker through GD-NET, but we still value our tight relationship with Enix. I think that since our company will have multiple product lines, we think we'll continue Enix's line.



Soul Blader: The company's second release (after *Actraiser*) and the first of Quintet's now-legendary series of creation-themed action/RPGs.

GF: What has changed since you've joined GD-NET?

QT: There have been many changes. The biggest change is, as a developer, we had to consider the opinions of the manufacturer when developing a game. Enix treated us very well and tried not to make us lose the distinct style of Quintet. That was very nice of them, but we wanted to create something different, not only Action RPGs. I think the opportunity to create the things that we want is at GD-NET. The racing game that we are working on right now is 180 degrees away from Quintet's usual style, but GD-NET had nothing to say and has kept the stance of letting us work freely. We really appreciate that about GD-NET.

GF: So, when you make a game as a developer, the manufacturer limits your work, that's what you mean, right? But with GD-NET, those top people from 9 companies get together and have a meeting for the proposal. Is there any difference between the decisions made by GD-NET and actual manufacturers?

QT: Yes, there are major differences. Manufacturers have their own strategies, like releasing Action RPGs by Quintet, a certain other type of game by the Dragon Quest team, etc. So, Enix wanted us to create the Action RPGs that Quintet is good at. But, the comments from GD-NET are never like, "This game is not your company's type" or "This type of game is too old-fashioned for today". They think from the perspective of what we can do to make this game more fun. So, there weren't any negative opinions about us making a racing game instead of another Action RPG.

GF: So, people in Japan equate Quintet with Action RPGs?

QT: Yes, definitely (laughs).

GF: But, *Actraiser 2* was a total action game. That wasn't your original idea?

QT: No, quite the opposite. It was actually Enix of America that asked us to make that. We made it to their specifications.

GF: The theme of your games is always "Destruction and Creation." Where did you get this idea from?

QT: The way most action games work is that there are enemies, and you destroy them for the sake of your quest. That's destruction, right? That's the ordinary system, and I thought it was becoming too cliche. So, if you *create* something from your destruction, it makes the game more interesting, and piques the gamer's interest about what will happen next. I think it builds up your imagination as you go.

GF: We've heard that you're making a Saturn version of *Actraiser*, but that it's not coming out from GD-NET. Can you tell us more about this?

QT: The basis of the game was the creation parts of *Actraiser 1*, but the system itself is completely different. Even Japanese magazines have referred to it as *Actraiser Gaiden*, but actually, it no longer has anything to do with *Actraiser*.

Originally we were working on it as the re-make of *Actraiser*, but after we were half-way done with it, we thought it was not the game for today's users. It is definitely a game from 5 years ago. So, we started over and re-wrote the proposal. As a result, the image became something different than *Actraiser*, but we've decided to keep the essence of the creation parts from *Actraiser*.

GF: So it's more of a strategy game?

QT: I think so. If 100 people played it, not one person would think it was *Actraiser*. We've changed it that much (laughs).

GF: So, you won't be using *Actraiser* in the title?

QT: No, it is not 100% final, but we're currently calling it *Solo Crisis*.

GF: This game will be released from Sega, right? It means Enix has nothing to do with it?

QT: Enix is involved in the contract, but their name won't appear on the game.

GF: How about GD-NET stuff? Like the racing game that you've mentioned earlier?

QT: It is too early to release any information because it won't be out until the end of 1997 (laughs). And this will be our first title from GD-NET.

GF: So, besides those two games, are you working on anything else?

QT: Well, there are 2 more...

GF: How many staff members do you have?

QT: About 26 people.

GF: Sorry for interrupting (laughs), and about that racing game....

QT: Oh, that's right. Race games are always a battle between the cars, and everything ends up being from the drivers' perspectives. But really, there are so many more people involved at the racing track, aren't there? So this game includes other peoples' perspectives, in addition to the drivers'. Since it is too early, that's all I can say.

GF: Are you thinking about another game in the *Soul Blader, Illusion of Gaia, Tenchi Sozo* series?

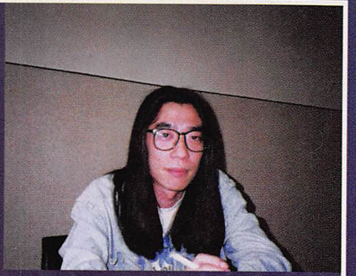
QT: No. That all depends on Enix.

GF: Whatever they may be, everyone at GameFan is anxiously awaiting your next releases. Thank you very much for your time!



Tenchi Sozo: Quintet's best and most recent effort. It's also the only one never released in the states.





President Masaki Hashimoto ***Vice-President Tomoyoshi Miyazaki***

Mr. Hashimoto and Mr. Miyazaki met at Falcom, where both worked on the early chapters of the *Y's* series. The six titles they've developed as Quintet are among the SuFami/SNES' most memorable titles.

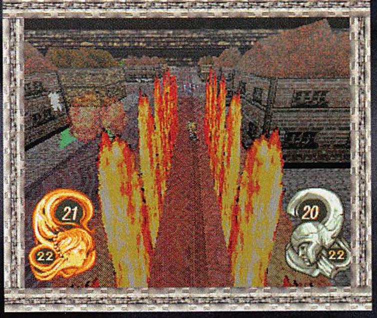


ラングリッサー III

LANGRISSER III

"Hope for the best, but plan for the worse." Ah, If I had a nickel for every time I heard my dear old mum tell me that one, I'd be at least 35 cents richer. It's good advice, and I think *Langrisser III* is exactly what she had in mind. *Langrisser* is, after all, one of the three best video game strategy series in existence (right up there with the now-defunct *Ogre* series and Hudson's *Nectaris/Military Madness*, in my opinion), and has never disappointed me before... But *III* has new staff, a new platform, a new obsession with bad 3D, and a new musician. Furthermore, the early demo we received kind of hurt. But it was still *Langrisser*, and I never lost hope for it.

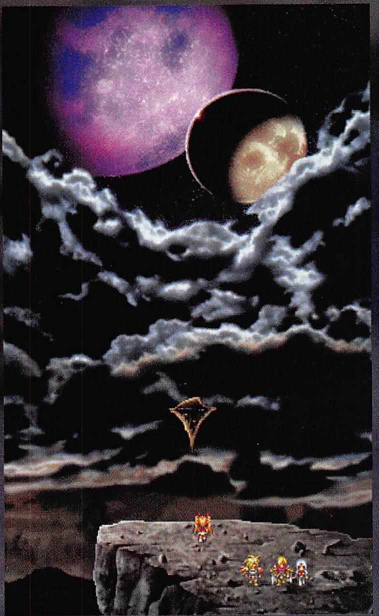




So what's the verdict? Mixed, but mostly good. The battle system, though somewhat fixed compared to our early demo, is still one huge flaw, a system that leaves you with a frustrating lack of control and some woefully sad 3D environments (although one or two of the backgrounds are actually pretty impressive looking). These battles add almost no strategy to game, and take a tediously long time to plan and watch. But there is an upside: You can turn them off! Completely! And after that, I found myself pretty much enjoying *Langrisser III*.

In *LIII* you can no longer carefully plan and execute a strategy for each unit under your control. Now you can only give orders to your generals, who don't even act them out until the end of the turn, when the computer opponents also make their decisions. Although this can be frustrating, that new strategic necessity of having to anticipate your opponents' movements almost makes up for the amount of strategy lost by not giving you individual control of your soldiers... Almost.

Thankfully, a few other new options go a long way towards filling that strategic void. You can class change your characters before any match, forcing you to learn to evaluate which units will work best in each situation. And the generals have a few new tricks, such as skills that can be used (but take up your turn), and powerful new magic. Magic isn't new to the *Langrisser* series by any means, but this is the first version in which I'd characterize the magic as *useful*. Almost too useful, actually; you can practically resurrect an entire army with a 3MP "Heal 1" spell. Another new option is the concept of "modes," which can be changed at any time without taking your turn. By putting your character in high speed mode,

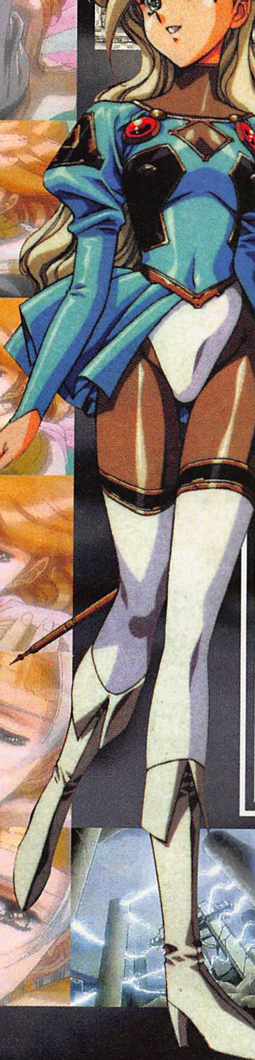






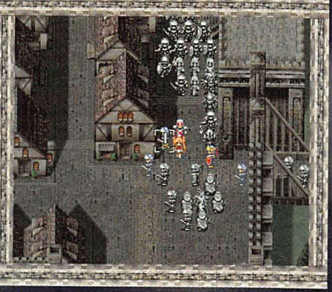










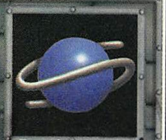


you lose attack and defensive power, but gain 30% movement... This is perfect, as in every previous *Langrisser* you'd have to spend many boring turns just walking towards the enemies, and many of the slower characters never did manage to catch up with the action. The other new mode is "defensive," which raises your stats, but with the caveat that you can no longer move *at all.* A good idea, but this combined with the enormously powerful heal spells and treatment options favor the defending side a bit too much.

Langrisser III does have a great storyline, especially by the standards of the series. It's not one evil empire this time, it's a complicated conflict involving four major factions, none of which could be characterized as "just plain evil." This adds one new twist to some of the maps; why kill all the enemies yourself when you can make them fight each other? And of course, *Langrisser III* continues the tradition of having a variety of different battle objectives, from complete annihilation of your foes, to defending villagers, to simply escaping alive.

The overhead graphics are pretty good, and occasionally amazing. The intro is exceptional, and Satoshi Urushibara's artwork is better than ever. The soundtrack is a mixed bag: There are some good tracks, but none of it even comes near to touching the masterpieces created by former *Langrisser* composer Noriyuki Iwadare. How ironic that a series with a reputation for exceptional music on the *Genesis* would lose that reputation on a *CD* system...

All in all, *Langrisser III* is a good game that could easily have been better. Although I appreciate when companies try to breath new life into a series by updating its basic systems, the changes in *Langrisser III* are too drastic and not always for the better. Still, there's enough of the old time *Langrisser* charm to make this well worth a purchase for strategy fans. ***T***

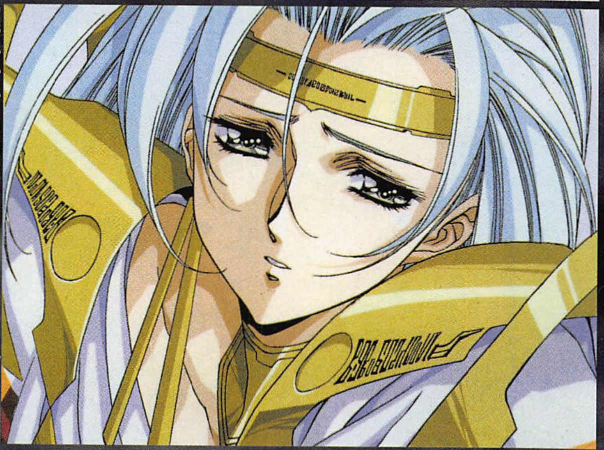


Developer: NCS
Publisher: Masaya
Available: Now





Takuhi

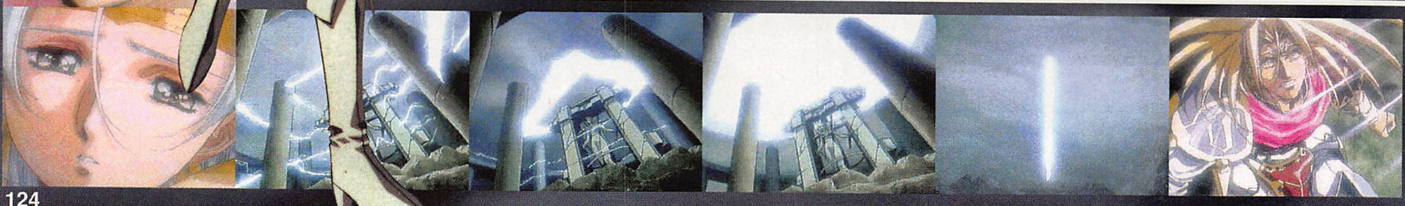


There are two *Langrisser III* music CDs: one is the original soundtrack, the other is a "song book." Both are okay, but if you're truly interested, I suggest checking into the soundtracks from *Langrisser 1* and *2.* The CD shown on the left is the soundtrack to the PC Engine Super CD version of *Langrisser*, which is quite good, and the one in the middle is the arranged soundtrack of Genesis *Langrisser II*, which is even better. In addition to the CDs, there's a gorgeous mousepad, drawn by *Langrisser* character designer Satoshi Urushibara, featuring the women of *Langrisser III*. Unfortunately, it's, um, for ages 18+ only, so I can't exactly show that here...



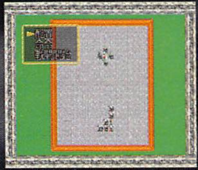






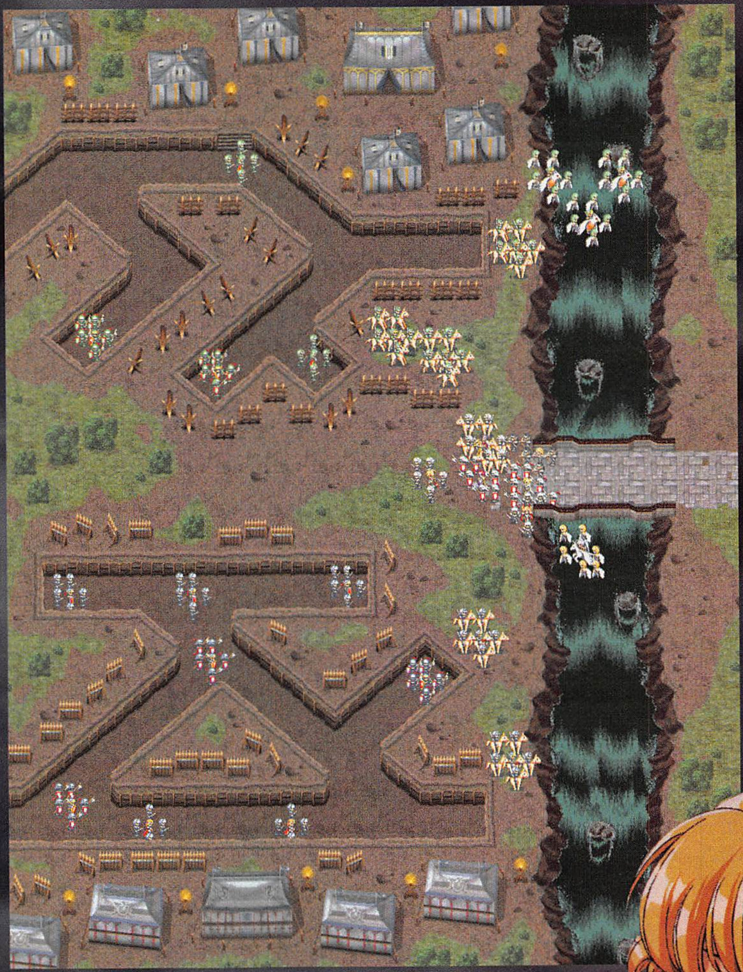
Battle System

In *Langrisser III*, whenever you are attacked, or choose to an attack an enemy, it switches to these pre-battle planning screens. With these, you can position the various members of the group that was attacked, and give them specific orders. Then, when complete, it switches to the 3D battle visuals. Unfortunately, where you place your soldiers rarely makes any difference, and the soldiers usually ignore orders to attack any specific target. It doesn't really matter, though, as the outcome of the battle fluctuates very little, no matter what you do. You can turn all of this stuff off, and let the computer just tell you the results instantly, making for a much quicker and more enjoyable game.

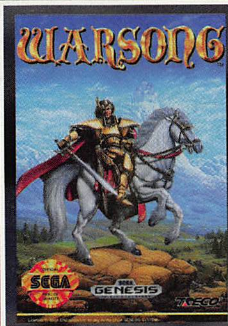












Only one *Langrisser* game was actually released in the US; the original Genesis version by Treco. Called *Warsong*, it is extremely rare and now a bit of a collector's item... But still available in the used bins at Blockbuster Videos everywhere. A few companies are interested in releasing *Langrisser III*, so we'll have to wait and see what happens with that.

Langrisser games always get their start on Sega systems, but versions of them have hit the Super Famicom, PC Engine Super CD, and PC-FX. Current rumor has it that a version of *LIII* is on its way to the PlayStation... If Masaya's record is any indication, that seems very likely. Incidentally, the English spelling of "Langrisser" tends to fluctuate, and was spelled as "Lungrisser" on part II. *Der Langrisser* is basically just an expanded version of *Langrisser II*.

The Complete Gameography:
1991 - *Langrisser* (MegaDrive)
1991 - *Warsong* (Genesis)
1992 - *Langrisser* (PC Engine Super CD-ROM)
1994 - *Langrisser II* (MegaDrive)
1995 - *Der Langrisser* (Super Famicom)
1996 - *Der Langrisser* (PC-FX)
1996 - *Langrisser III* (Saturn)





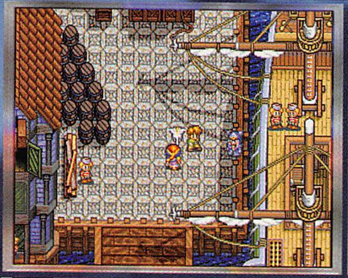
As you may know, the big RPG season in Japan is summer, when every company plans to release their biggest and best titles. And since, much like in the states, everything in Japan gets delayed about 3 or 4 months before its released, the next two or three months are looking to be the biggest RPG flood in the history of 32-bit, if not ever.

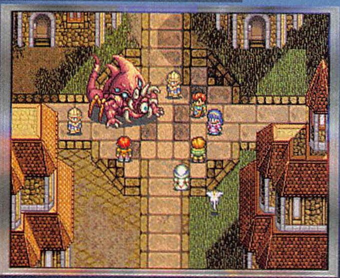
We've got all the big sequels: *Arc the Lad*, *Lunar*, *Tengai Makyo*, *Riglord Saga*, the new *Shining* game, and a little game called *Final Fantasy*. We've got a ton of hot-looking, long-awaited titles like *Wild Arms*, *Airs Adventure*, *Terra Phantastica*, and that first N64 RPG, *Wonder Project J2*. And we've only got two pages left in this issue to cover 'em all. Well, that's not looking too possible, so I'll just give you a quick look at the whole crop this month (with more in-depth previews of *Arc* and *Lunar*), and we'll start the full coverage come February.











While *Lunar: Silver Star Story*'s often bland overhead graphics disappointed me a bit, this remake excels in every other imaginable way. The storyline has been drastically redone, and the game is full of new scenes, characters, dungeons, and puzzles. The animated intermissions (of which there is nearly 50 minutes) is especially astounding – although it's only half-screen, it's crystal clear and impressive mixed with computer graphics. And the music is everything you'd expect from a *Lunar* title.

The beauty and completeness of the storyline now easily matches the quality of *Lunar 2*'s, and the great deal of new content ensures that even those who played the Sega-CD original to death will have plenty of fun with this one... Supposedly, the most drastic changes come at the end, so I'll be back with a report on that topic and a full layout next month!

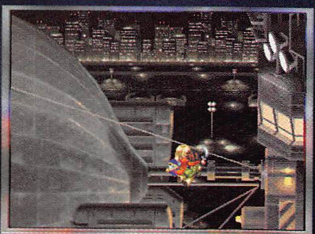
One of a number of dramatic new scenes:



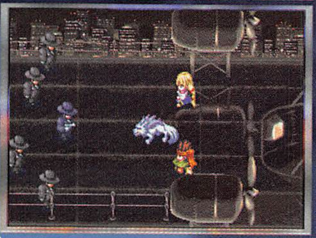








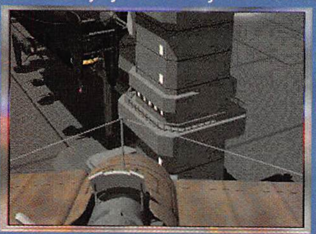




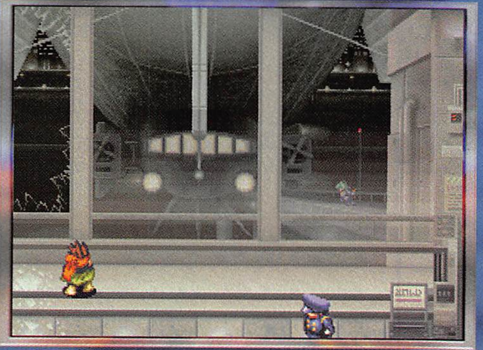


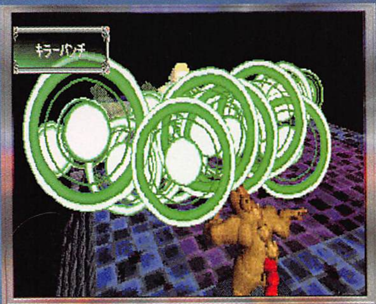
Whether you like *Arc*'s style or not, you can't deny that starting a fantasy-RPG with an airport hostage crisis is just plain cool. *Arc the Lad II* starts with a bang and, just like the first, keeps the adrenaline level high with good graphics, awesome spells, a hot soundtrack, and an innovative fantasy world. *Arc 2* has already fixed one of the original title's faults: not only does the game feature numerous large towns that you can walk around freely in, but it also features many non-linear elements. Will it also fix the original's serious shortage in the length department? You'll have to tune in to the extended coverage next month to find that out... I've only had a chance to play it for 3 or 4 hours, but so far I've enjoyed every minute of it.



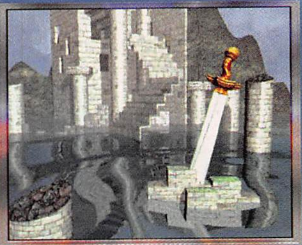












Riglord Saga 2 (left)

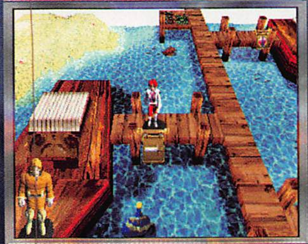
The sequel to *Riglord Saga* (renamed *Mystaria* here), has just hit the Saturn, and may be released in English within the next few months. Fans of *Riglord's* storyline, music, and graphic style will be very pleased with the sequel, but skeptics may remain unconvinced by the still weak graphics quality. Although the spells and environments (especially the towns, which are far improved over *Riglord 1's*) look very impressive, this title suffers from the same frame rate problems that the Japanese original did. Hopefully those will be fixed before this one's America's release, because there's a lot of strategic depth here that I'd hate to see wasted.





Vandalhearts (right)

Konami's first strategy/RPG, *Vandalhearts* features fully rotatable texture-mapped environments coupled with hand-drawn characters. The basic strategy is highly derivative of such titles as *Tactics Ogre*, but with more varied objectives. *Vandalhearts* is a pretty cool strategy game (although anyone who's actually played *Tactics Ogre* might find it a bit redundant), and there's legitimate hope for an American release, Konami says, if *Suikoden* sells well (and it will). Although the originality and music aren't up to the high standards of that revered title, an American release for *Vandalhearts* would definitely be a cause for celebration.









Bastard!!

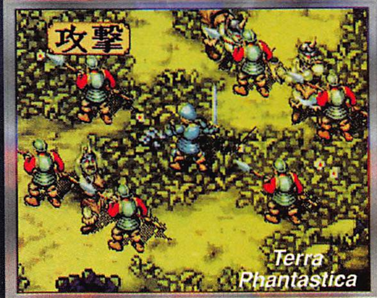


Tengai Makyo

After Arc II, the PlayStation's next big RPG is the impressive-looking *Wild Arms*, which now has a release date of December 20th. Before that, a number of smaller RPGs will be hitting, including *Blue Forest Story*, a translation of Right Stuff's little seen 3DO RPG, and fantasy-based strategy title *First Queen IV*.

Also coming around the end of the year is Seta's *Bastard!!*, based on the D&D-esque manga of the same name. This one looks interesting; an eclectic mix of *Myst*-style1st-person scenes, polygon-based battle scenes, and lots of full screen animated FMV.

All the PlayStation developers are being very careful not to schedule anything too close to *Final Fantasy VII's* release date, January 31st (hmm... wonder why?). Afterwards, though, is a very different story., as it's inevitable that that title's release will bring millions (I mean, literally) of new RPG fans to the PlayStation. Among the titles hoping to cash in on the tidal wave of new gamers are Ascii's Make-Your-Own Strategy/RPG title, Yanoman's *Feda 2*, Square's own *Saga Frontier* and *Final Fantasy Tactics*, and Pioneer's *Bounty Sword First*. Another big PlayStation announcement was the sequel to Namco's 48-meg Super Famicom RPG, *Tales of Phantasia*. The sequel is being called *Tales of Destiny*, and uses fundamentally the same systems (including the side-scrolling battles).



Terra Phantastica



Tengai Makyo

On the Saturn side, *Lunar: The Silver Star Story* and *Riglord Saga 2* are only the first of a number of high-profile year-end Saturn titles. Following in December are *Terra Phantastica*, a *Dragon Force*-esque strategy/RPG that is evidently what *Phantasy Earth* ended up turning into... But there's no *Phantasy Star* connection. Sorry. Also coming in December is *Shining the Holy Ark*, the new *Shining* title we showed last month, a Saturn remake of *Tactics Ogre*, and *Airs Adventure*, Sega's beginner-friendly, 3D RPG that's been in development for nearly 2 years.

January 14th comes *Tengai Makyo: The 4th Revelation*, which is as close as Sega's going to get to a *Final Fantasy*-level RPG (sales-wise), unless *Dragon Quest* comes their way. Based on an intentionally confused version of American history, and with fully animated battle scenes, this newest incarnation of the formerly PC Engine based series looks to be the king of the hand-drawn RPGs.



Terra Phantastica



Tales of Destiny



Air's Adventure



Tales of Destiny



Air's Adventure



SAMURAI SHODOWN IV
AMAKUSA'S REVENGE

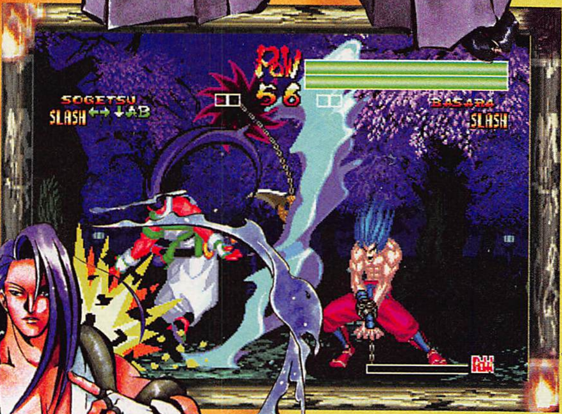






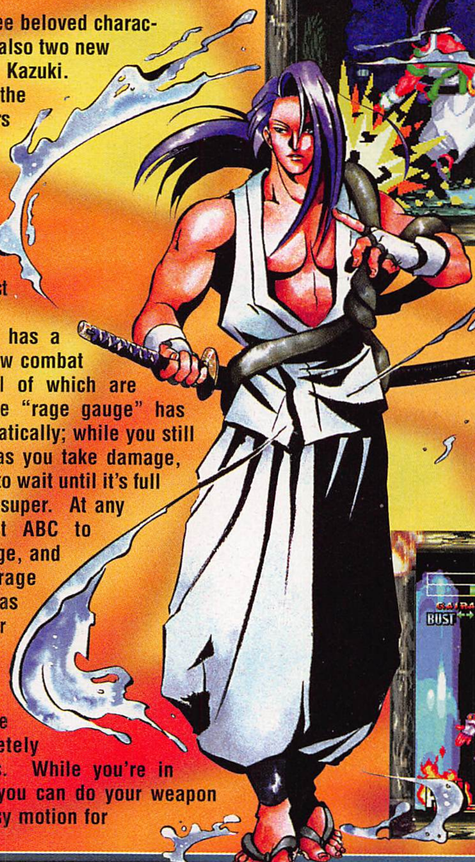






With SNK having their hands full with the vaporware *Samurai Spirits RPG*, I was afraid that we *Samurai* fans would completely miss this year's annual upgrade. Fortunately, this was not the case: Although *Samurai IV* may be more of an upgrade to *Samurai III* than a completely original game, I doubt we'll be hearing any complaints from the *Samurai Spirits* crowd about the quality of the final product.

Most noteworthy is the return of Charlotte, Tam Tam, and Jubei, three beloved characters who mysteriously failed to make the cut in *Samurai III*. There are also two new characters, water-commanding Sogetsu, and his fire-based brother, Kazuki. The chivalry/treachery system (once again crudely translated within the game itself as "slash/bust") is back, and all of the *Samurai III* characters have at least one new move in each of their incarnations. The weapon break system has been refined, and most of the characters have new moves in that department, as well (many of their supers from *Samurai III* now exist as throws).

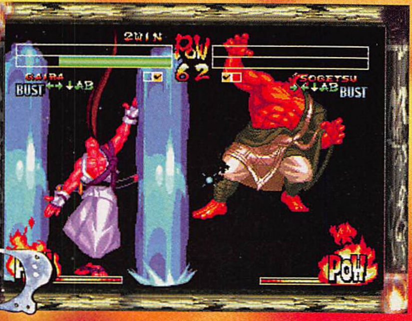




Samurai IV also has a dazzling array of new combat systems, nearly all of which are improvements. The "rage gauge" has been changed dramatically; while you still accumulate power as you take damage, you no longer need to wait until it's full before you do your super. At any time, you can hit ABC to "explode" your gauge, and then have your rage abilities for as long as it takes for your accumulated rage to tick down. The penalty for this is that your rage gauge will be completely removed afterwards. While you're in your "rage" state, you can do your weapon break (the same easy motion for







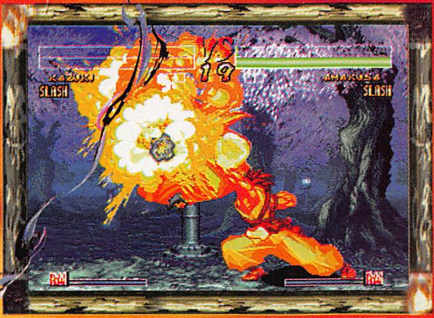
REVIEW

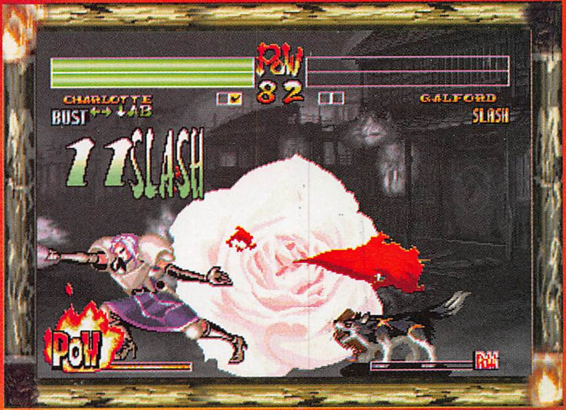
DEVELOPER -SNK	# OF PLAYERS -1-2
PUBLISHER - SNK	DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
FORMAT -CD	AVAILABLE - CART. NOV. CD DEC.



TAKUHI
DON'T YOU THINK I'M SCRUMPTIOUS? VICTOLY!





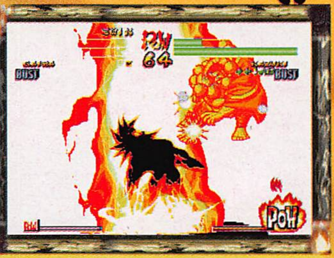


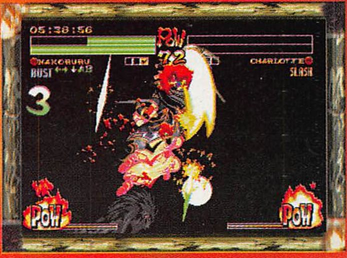
every character: back - forward - down + AB), hold down ABC to do some sort of auto super combo, or hit BCD for a speed-up.

In addition to that rage gauge auto combo, *Samurai IV* has a rather simple combo system that lets each character do up to a 15-hit unblockable combo. Your CD slash is now the key to start this, and then by entering the right sequences, (forward AABBCCABCCCCC for the 15-hit) you can do one of 4 combos. These do surprisingly little damage, but look very cool and completely fill your rage gauge. There are also new two-in-ones, dodges, down attacks, a somewhat troubling fatality system, the ability to refill a little health while you're down, and a new taunt in which you actually throw down your own weapon – a great way to humiliate an opponent before you beat him with your bare hands. Most important of all is the double size life bars, a much needed fix for the "three hits and you're dead" problem that plagued *Samurai III*.



Samurai IV uses mostly the same character animation for all of the characters that were in *Samurai III*, and many of the new backgrounds are made up of chunks of *III* as well. Although some may find this intolerably cheap, it's obvious to me that the time these shortcuts saved them was well-spent, refining all of the existing characters and coming up with some very innovative systems. One shortcut that I did find a bit excessive was the Sogetsu/Kazuki, "head swap." Surely everyone deserves their own body? Also, there's no new boss (Zankuro again), or if there is (and I doubt it), he or she is pretty well hidden.



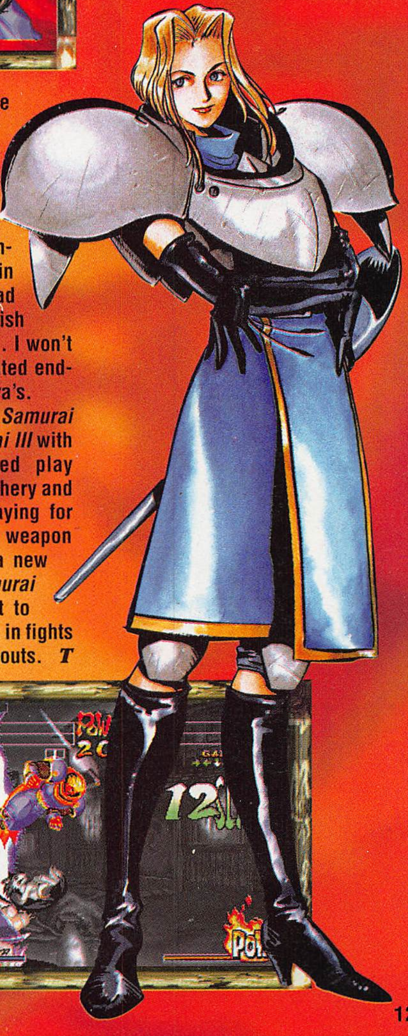




When you play *Samurai IV* as a one-player game, it has a storyline mode in which each character fights his own nemesis (among the other characters) at the end, and features a few amusing conversation scenes. Remember the "you crazy funster!"-type translations we all used to make fun of in *Samurai I-III*? Well, that guy's long gone, and instead we have a new translator whose grasp of English grammar, spelling, punctuation and slang... well... I won't even spoil it for you. Seeing the hideously translated endings is half the fun! Make sure you don't miss Gaira's.

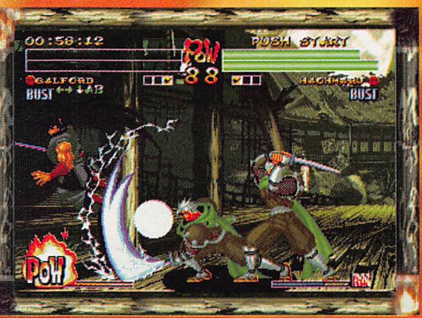






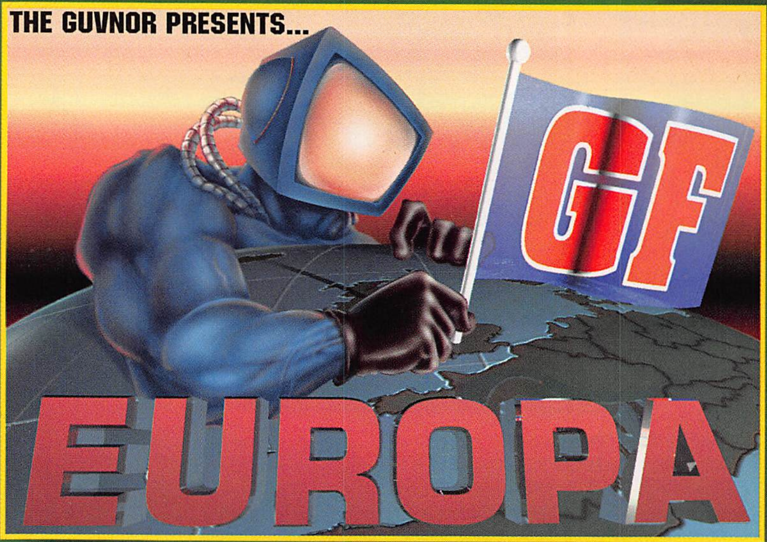
Although some may complaint about shortcuts, *Samurai IV* is a great game: All the good parts from *Samurai III* with five new characters and completely revamped play mechanics. The 34 total characters (counting treachery and chivalry versions as separate) will keep you playing for months, and the newly standardized combos and weapon break moves make it easier than ever to learn a new character. Best of all, you can enjoy the *Samurai* series' tradition of great graphics, music (forgot to mention that earlier, didn't I?), and play mechanics in fights that now last longer than *Samurai III*'s 10 second bouts. *T*











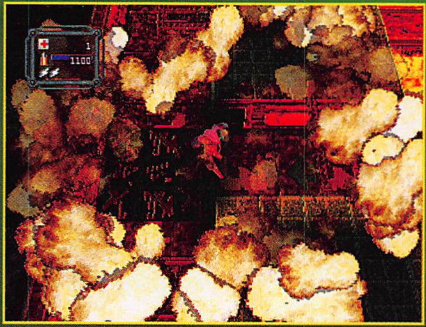
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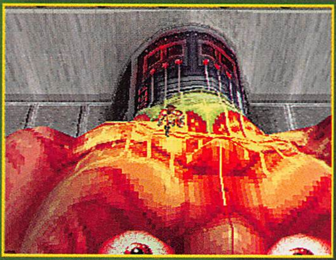
WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF UK GAMING!!

I don't know how you picture UK gamers, but one word which sums the situation up well is 'desperate'. So far as pecking order goes, we're near the end of the chain insofar as the latest Japanese launches go, and we've only a handful of (admittedly talented) home-grown console developers to our name. Small wonder that the biggest excitement surrounds the gray import market, as you've got to be pretty dim to appreciate half-arsed PAL conversions of most cool games. Tekken 2, for example, is a shambling travesty of a transition from Arcade thru NTSC thru PAL (running at a frame-rate of 50fps). The only company who seems to give a damn is Sega, whose in-house games are always optimized to run as they were intended. And that short paragraph pretty much sums the situation up (as you can tell by the charts) this month, as you'll soon find out...

RE-LOADED – DIRTIER THAN EVER!

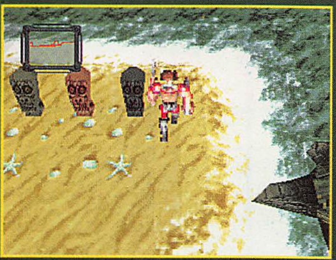
Let's get straight down to details: Re-Loaded loses the horny girl character, Vox, but gains two extra bloodthirsty mercs – The Consumer, and Magpie. Consumer is the Tank Girlesque babe with rocket turrets surgically implanted on her back. Magpie is described by producers Gremlin as a "Cyber-Nun," who totes a mean-looking gun named "Mother Superior." Apparently Magpie was originally designed for a Super NES game from Gremlin which never saw the light of day. Re-Loaded adds conversation to the mix too, so the killers get to hear useful clues from their victims before saying good-bye as only they know how!

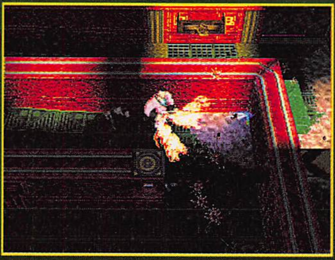




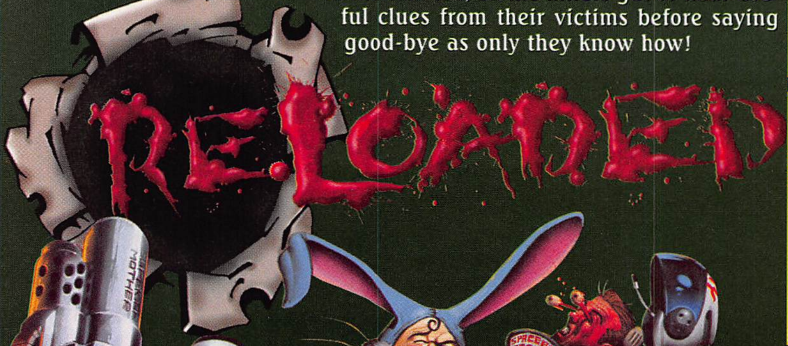


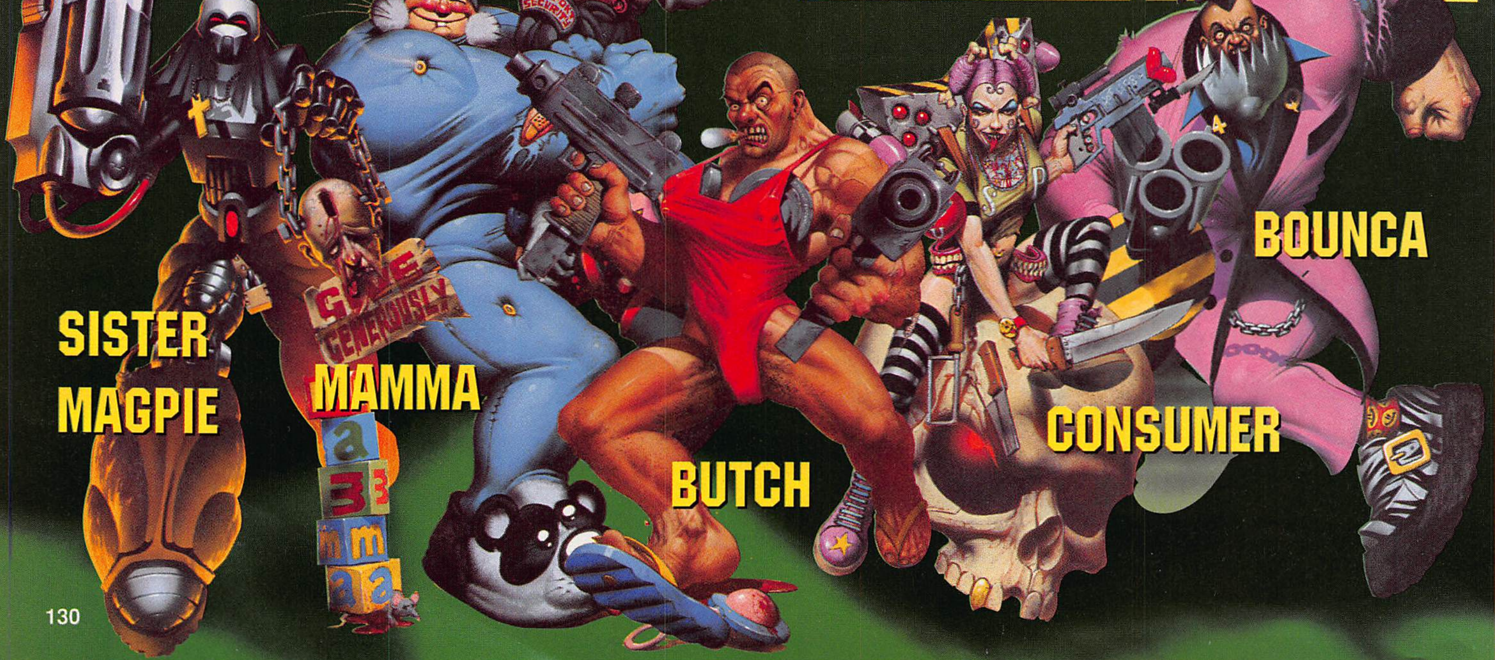












SONY BAN PLAYSTATION "DE-BUGGING" CHIP

The UK's last hope of playing all Namco and Capcom's PlayStation games in full NTSC-o-vision recently vanished as Sony pulled the legals on the small independents selling and/or fitting the infamous chip. The reason was not so much to do with the prevention of imported games, rather it was a clamp down on pirated software. A lot of gold discs of unfinished, illegal titles have been available for many months – Tekken 2, for example. Sony blamed the chip. Yeah, well the wisest people got their machines done before the event. So "hah!"

WORLDWIDE SOCCER SAVES SATURN?

For all Sega's awesome games, the Saturn isn't quite getting the recognition it deserves in old Blighty. BUT... it looks like Sega has a chance with a brilliant new football (or soccer, I believe the American vernacular is) game. Worldwide is commanding crowds in all the major retailers, big as any that Wipeout 2097 (aka Wipeout XL) or Formula 1 have seen. Of course you might know that this is the only game Sega hasn't planned any major marketing strategies for. So there's no TV advertising, or huge billboards to shout about its greatness. Idiots.

NINTENDO 64 - PREPARE FOR LAUNCH!

Even across the 'Big Pond,' you could probably hear the sighs of relief from millions of British Nintendo fans when THE Games - Nintendo's UK distributor - finally confirmed the launch date of the Nintendo 64: March 1st, 1997. Although somewhat later than the vague "Late Fall, 1996" previously promised, this date at least rewards the eternally-patient Brit gamers with a reasonably large catalog of games ready to roll at launch.

Indeed, on March 1st, punters will be able to choose between Super Mario 64, Pilotwings 64, WaveRace 64 and Star Wars: Shadows Of The Empire, with around four more titles released subsequently every month. One big question still hanging over the N64's games is how well they'll be converted to the British PAL TV system. Although PAL gives a higher definition picture than the US and Japanese NTSC system, it updates the screen at 50Hz - nearly 17% slower than NTSC (hence your 'orrible PlayStation conversions). Traditionally this has meant UK games run slower than their US and Japanese counterparts and have black borders at the top and bottom of the screen, creating a squashed, 'Cinemascope'-style effect. Converting games to fill the PAL screen and run at full speed takes development time and money, and given the relatively small UK market, most companies don't feel it's worth making the effort. Here's hoping, though...

INSIDE STALAG RARE!

As an extra little tidbit, here's a glimpse of one of the nice treats when you're a big-shot games magazine journalist like me and are visiting those lovely software developers. Not only do you get a day out of the office and a couple of beers with the coders (all on company expenses, of course), you also get the privilege to take a peek at all their secret projects in development, typically months before the first screenshots appear in print.

Unless, of course, you're visiting Rare, creators of the Donkey Kong Country and Killer Instinct series. After Mr. Miyamoto and the crew at NCL, Rare must rank as the world's premier Nintendo games developer – and the most secretive. Entering Rare's offices, a beautiful converted farmhouse in the middle of the English countryside, is like stepping into a scene out of a Tom Clancy novel.



On arrival at Rare's reception, guests are ushered directly into the boardroom, the walls of which are adorned with magazine covers and videogame packaging celebrating every game Rare has ever created. The games to be demonstrated are brought in, presented to you on a giant TV screen and then taken away. At lunchtime, food is brought in too. Finally, when your time is up, you leave the boardroom and the building, and make your way home.

Want to take a peek to see what other Rare treats the company has got up its sleeves? Forget it! Even Rare's several in-house development teams only have color-coded swipecards permitting them access to their own offices, thus preventing them spying on their colleagues' projects. It's all very weird - but hey, it seems to work...

CHRISTMAS NiGHTS

Like I said, Sega has a great reputation in the UK for providing great PAL versions of all their games. And the one we're most excited about at the moment is Christmas NiGHTS, which is guaranteed to sell by the bucket-load alongside Worldwide Soccer (see above). You probably already know all about the game contents, so I'll just pass on how Sega Europe is handling Sonic Team's beautiful present over here. Basically, anybody who buys a Saturn gets the game (same as Japan), OR... existing Saturn owners who invest in any of the new Sega developed games (Worldwide Soccer, Fighting Vipers, Daytona CCE, or even NiGHTS) get the game too. Yuji Naka we love you!!!









DECEMBER UK ALL-FORMAT CHARTS

1. Wipeout 2097 – PlayStation
2. Championship Manager 2 – PC CD-ROM
3. Dark Forces: Red Tag PC CD-ROM
4. Championship Manager Double Pack – PC CD-ROM
5. Syndicate Wars – PC CD-ROM
6. Tomb Raider – Saturn
7. Tekken 2 – PlayStation
8. Flight Sim 6.0 – PC CD-ROM
9. Formula One – PlayStation
10. Worldwide Soccer 97 – Saturn
11. Worms United – PC CD-ROM
12. Tie-Fighter: Red Tag – PC CD-ROM
13. Fighting Vipers – Saturn
14. Indy Car: Red Tag – PC CD-ROM
15. Wallace & Gromit – PC CD-ROM
16. Network Q Rally – PC CD-ROM
17. Tunnel B1 – PlayStation
18. Bubble Bobble – PlayStation
19. Actua Golf – PlayStation
20. Civilization 2 – PC CD-ROM

RIGHT, THAT'S ALL THE JUICY GOSSIP OUT OF THE WAY! TATTY-BYE FOR NOW; SEE YOU NEXT MONTH, YOU SLAGS!! - THE GUVNOR

THE SHOSHINKAI MUST GO ON!

Rumors, rumors, rumors. You want 'em? We got 'em! As we prepare for the inevitable pantaloon explosions caused by the Shoshinkai, I'm ready and willing to divulge all available information, despite not knowing what the hell the Big "N" has planned. Except this...

PREPARE FOR CART-BASED POLYGONAL LINK-FEST!

The Legend of Zelda 64 on the 64DD bulky thing? Not any more! Prepare for the cartridge version! Nintendo has already announced in Japanese gaming publications that *The Legend of Zelda 64* will not be playable at the upcoming show. Because of this, Nintendo has said that a five-minute video will be shown and, of course, we shall be procuring this masterpiece for the next issue of GameFan. Now we all know that Nintendo promised to have *Zelda 64* playable at this show, but this appears to have not been, er, completely truthful. The reason? Mr. Miyamoto. Miyamoto felt *Zelda 64* shouldn't be playable at this stage because it hasn't received any comprehensive bug testing yet and would detract from the overall playing experience if one was present at the show. The reason *Zelda* should be cartridge only? Well, *Zelda 64* is still scheduled for a 2nd or 3rd quarter release in 1997, but sources at NCL have told me to expect to see the 64DD released around the same time the N64 was released last year (June) in Japan, with this planned release likely to slip to the end of 1997.

In the next issue of GameFan, we should have a real date, pictures (not to be confused with the *Zelda* pictures from the first Shoshinkai!), and hopefully an interview with Mr. Miyamoto concerning *Zelda 64*. To finish our *Zelda*-thon, Nintendo is rumored to have mentioned that *Zelda 64* will be the first NCL game of over 100 meg; most likely a 128-meg cartridge. Remember though, everything could change; Nintendo is notoriously flaky... er, allegedly.

A BLOW BY BLOW ON NINTENDO SHOW INFO!

What Nintendo games will be playable at the Shoshinkai 1996?

The list of the six main games so far is this: *StarFox 64*, *Super Mario Kart R*, *Blast Corps*, *Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire*, *Golden Eye 007* and *Kirby's Air Ride*. Now Nintendo might have other games that could appear on the show floor that I didn't mention above (just like the first Shoshinkai in 1995), but we won't know until the first day of the show (obviously!). Because of the shortage of games there at the show, Nintendo has boosted their presence with a ten-minute video showing the entire N64 lineup for 1997. This video could feature more than ten games (the likely candidates are *F-Zero 64*, *Killer Instinct Gold*, *Body Harvest*, *Yoshi's Island*, *The Legend of Zelda 64*, *Tetrisphere*, and four other titles no one knows about yet!), and could feature other 3rd party games, but my sources did not tell what those games would be.

The 64DD (the Nintendo Bulky Drive) will be at the show but won't have any software running on it. Unfortunately, it'll probably be encased so people can look, but can't touch. The 64DD will be released in Japan in 1997 for under $150 and the US version is rumored to have a September release planned, at a suggested retail price of $99 (with an unknown game and 2 meg of RAM).

Also at the Shoshinkai, Nintendo is staging a *Super Mario Kart R* tournament, and the rumor-meister will be there to win the competition for all US gamers! Finally, *Super Mario Kart R* will not be 64-megs as promised before; it will now weight in at a massive 96-megs and may come with a special two-color controller! Remember where you heard it first! Then laugh as we get it wrong!

"YOU SAY SHOSHINKAI, I SAY ISHINKAI..."

You want the 1996 Shoshinkai software line-up? You got it!

Acclaim Japan:	*Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*
Athena:	*Pro Mahjong*
Imagineer:	*Pro Baseball King*
Enix:	*Wonder Project J2*
Epoch:	*Doraemon*
EAV:	*J League Live 64 (FIFA 97)*
Kemco:	*Blade and Barrel*
Gamebank:	*Hexen 64*
Koei:	*Mahjong 64*
Konami:	*Mahjong Master*
	Goemon 5 (Legend of the Mystical Ninja 5)
	Powerful Pro Baseball 64
	J League Perfect Striker
Seta:	*Rev Limit*
	Wild Choppers
	Saint Andrew's Golf
	Uki No Gotoku
	Shogi (with modem)
Tomy:	to be announced
Japan System:	*Cavalry Battle 3000*
	Chameleon Twist
Nintendo:	*Super Mario Kart R*
	other games to be announced
Hudson:	*Super Power League 64*
	Dual Heroes
	Soccer 64
Pack-in Soft:	*Mission: Impossible*
Video System:	*Mahjong*
	3D shooting game (of some sort)
Human:	*Human F1 Grand Prix*
Bottom-up:	sumo game (of some sort)

Well, there you have it. Every game I mentioned above will be playable at the Shoshinkai as Nintendo prepares to deluge Japanese gamers with some software (at last!). Out of the 28 game companies at the show, only 19 will be showing N64 products, while the remaining eight will show off Super NES and GameBoy software.

WELL, APPARENTLY, THERE'S THIS NEW CONSOLE CALLED THE NINTENDO 64...

Here are a bundle of new games coming to the N64 in 1997: Interplay has two new games (aside from *Ultra Descent*) planned for the N64 next year; *VR Baseball* and *VR Golf* (I know, the excitement was too much for me too). Also, Virgin Interactive may (or indeed, may not) be working on an N64 version of *Command & Conquer*. Ubi Soft officially announced an action/adventure game for the N64 called *Hed* (strangely, that awesome name is likely to be changed) sometime in 1997. Good Times (GT) Interactive is working on two games for N64; *Hexen 64* and *Quake 64*. Last on the list is *Lamborghini* (wait for it) *64*, (mustn't forget that suffix, must we?) a sequel based on the Titus, er, 'classic'; *Lamborghini American Challenge* for the Super NES.

SEGA NEWS
JACKY BRYANT VERSES... CANDY??!!!!

Shock news, Sega fans. ALL of Sega's AM2 division have been working on a new fighting game since July of this year, which should be completed by the end of November. The name of the new fighting

game is called *Fighting Mega Mix* (catchy, eh?) and will be released on December 21st in Japan. What is hot is that *FMM* features all of the *Virtua Fighter* and *Fighting Vipers* characters (a la *King of Fighters*). Some of the stages in *FMM* are taken from *VF 1, 2* and *FV*, but will be substantially altered with light-sourcing and other dazzling effects. Another feature is a special armor-breaker for all *VF* characters when fighting their rockin' buddies, but the *Virtua* clan aren't likely to be wearing any protection. There's a new escape button (from *Virtua Fighter 3*); the side-stepping move that every character may employ. Some of the *VF* characters in *FMM* will have some *VF 3* moves, and finally... there's an awesome rumor that there's a couple of Virtua City's finest police officers as hidden characters ("Hi, I'm Rage, and this here's my partner Smarty. Now put up yer dukes!")!! Special 'cor-blimey-luv-a-duck' thanks to the Guvnor for that info!

GAMING INDUSTRY STUNNED AS SEGA ANNOUNCES MORE FIGHTING GAMES FOR SATURN!

Recently, Sega of Japan officially announced some of their biggest titles for 1997. The most exciting of these has to be *Last Bronx* and *Virtua Fighter 3* (which we announced in Other Stuff several months back, along with many other rumors which were frankly just downright lies) but no date has been set for either title. Capcom has also announced another Sega Saturn title that has yet to be announced for PlayStation: *X-Men vs. Street Fighter* is coming to the Saturn in the 1st or 2nd quarter of 1997 with back-up ram cart. No word yet on price, but rumor suggests that it should be around $60 - $70. There may also be a *Virtual On 2* in development for the arcades, which may (or may not) use Sega's Model 3 hardware. The other game that is for Model 3 will be a driving game... "I'm gonna flyeee sky-high... again!" Yes, it could be *Daytona 2*!!

THREE *KOF*S ARE BETTER THAN ONE!

The last piece of Sega information is regarding *King of Fighters '95* & *'96*. SNK plans to sell three different game packages. One comes with *KOF '95* and the new *KOF '96* with the generic RAM and ROM card (the same one used for *Real Bout Fatal Fury*). The second package has *KOF '96* and the new RAM card, and the third package is just *KOF '96* (for those with the RAM card already). Sega certainly loves you... if you're Japanese.

LARA CROFT BOUNCES BACK!!

Core, creator of the amazing *Tomb Raider*, has confirmed to this reporter that production has just begun on the sequel! This is tentatively titled *Tomb Raider 2* (for some strange reason) and will be released in the Fall of 1997 for the PlayStation. Core has told us that a Saturn version is not very probable and PS is the hardware of choice for top developers because of the gigantic user base Sony has. Core also said that *TR 2* should take about half the time to program, considering the experience they gained while producing the original. The coolest innovation of *TR 2* is that Core is considering using Sony's new analog controller... but maybe not.

SHORYUKEN THREE!!

Recently our man in Japan went to Capcom to view the latest games in development for PlayStation and arcade. He had a chance to see the fabled *Street Fighter 3* and said "It looked okay" (never one for much emotion, this chap). The game had ten playable characters (Ken and Ryu are two), and the other eight characters are all brand new. All new backgrounds, the same Super Combos and all new music tracks are in *SF3*, and this 2D beat-'em-up extravaganza is currently around 95% complete; scheduled for a Japanese release in late December and in the US launch in January.

CAPCOM ZOMBIE INFESTATION...

Resident Evil 2 was also played and here's the scoop. *RE 2* is around 40% complete (as of November 11th), there are now up to eight characters on screen, although they're made of less polygons than those in *RE 1*. Some of the enemies in the sequel are zombies, bats, dogs, and spiders. You can now also have characters follow you and interact with you ("Will you stop following me, you hideous rotting horror!!"). *RE 2* has the same amount of rooms as in the first game but the difference is that they are 50% bigger now.

MEGAMAN - THE NEXT GENERATION

The last snippet we got from Capcom is that the Nintendo 64 game that they have been working on is now most likely to be *MegaMan 64*. The reason for this is that MegaMan is celebrating his ten year anniversary, and Capcom feels that *MegaMan* would be a perfect game for N64. Happy Birthday in advance, little blue dude...

SATURN QUAKE ON NET LINK?

Word reaches us that Sega has struck a multi-million dollar deal with GT Interactive for the exclusive rights to id's awesome 3D corridor shooter, *Quake*. If this deal is true, it would mean that *Quake* will appear exclusively on Saturn for an undisclosed period of time, and would feature prominently on Sega's incredible new Net Link. There's no news on how many players a Net Link version of *Quake* would support, but it's possible that it might be up to 16! *Quake* is one of the finest multi-player experiences on the planet, and this news comes as a severe blow to Sony and Nintendo, both of whom were expecting versions of *Quake* for their systems. Other Net Link joys coming this Christmas include *Bomberman* and the amazing *Virtual On*.

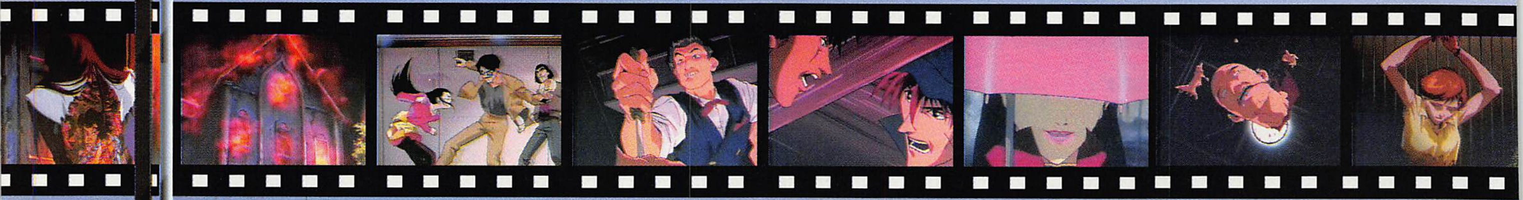
ALTERNATIVE ROCK

While game music certainly hasn't taken off here anywhere near the magnitude it has in Japan where lucky gamers can buy original and arranged versions of there favorite game music, we do have two new CDs to get excited about.

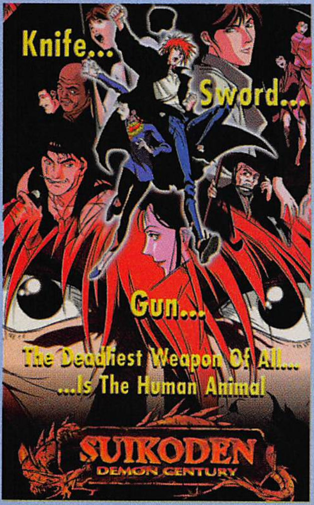
TVT Soundtrax' *Mortal Kombat: More Kombat* features new music by Psykosonik, Wax Trax, Killing Joke, and The Crystal Method to name just a few. The CD features 15 tracks which "take off where the soundtrack left off." Also coming soon is Tommy Tallarico's second game music CD release *Game's Greatest Hits Volume 2*. Now you can hear all the burnin' tunes from the games Tommy did that you never bought. Speaking of Tommy T. (sorry, I missed the party dude) he'll be hosting a new Fox Television videogame game-show that Tommy tells me is a cross between MTV and Entertainment Tonight.

Since that translates to non-stop rap music and behind the scenes info on people nobody cares about, I'm sure what Tommy means is that it's aimed at an older audience, unlike the other fruity video game shows we were so embarrassed by in the past. We'll have more info on the new show next month.

That about wraps it up for this month. Check out the February GameFan for an up-close look at the Shoshinkai and Sega Digital Circus.



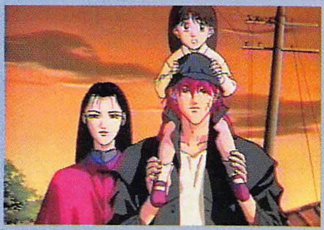
TAKUHI'S ANIME FAN



Suikoden, despite what you may have read elsewhere, has no direct connection to Konami's masterful PlayStation RPG. But they do both share the same source: An ancient Chinese legend in which 108 heroes from all walks of life rise up, band together, and fight against the injustice of a corrupt empire. Konami's *Suikoden* took the same theme, mood, and emotional impact and applied it to a more western style fantasy world, with great results. Hitoshi Yoshioka attempted the same thing with this anime; applying the classic tale to the post-earthquake crime-ridden Tokyo of the future. His results were far more mixed.



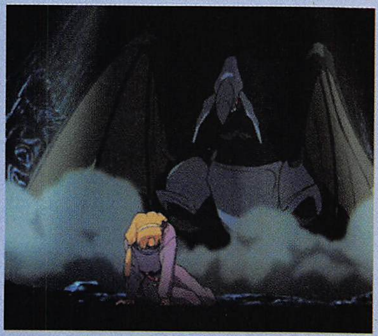
Suikoden (the anime) starts out great. It has an interesting setting, a cool main character and a likable transvestite sidekick. The animation in the action scenes is well done, and the first half hour has all the signs of being a great beginning to an enthralling and somewhat offbeat adventure. Unfortunately, 10 minutes later, it's over.

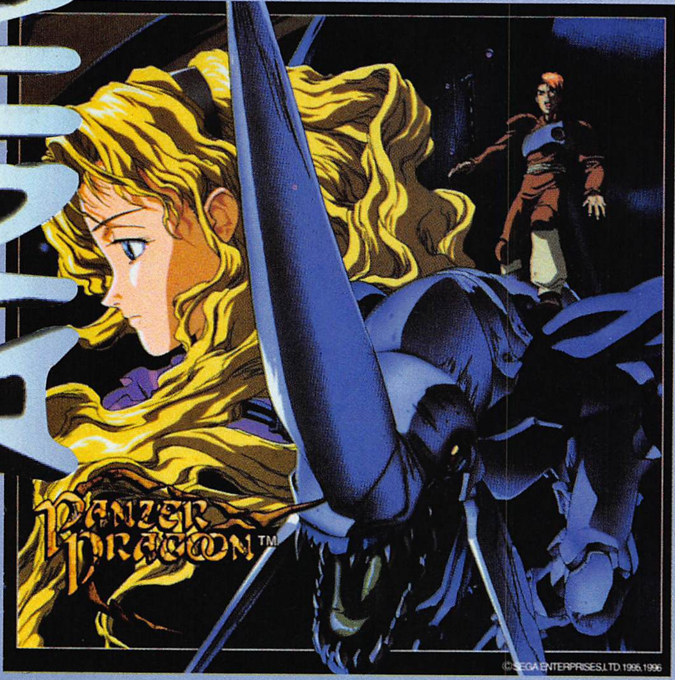


I had hoped and assumed that Suikoden would be the start of a series, in which our two heroes travel Japan righting wrongs and accumulating the other 106 reincarnations of the original *Suikoden* heroes. But despite constant references to the 108 heroes of *Suikoden* legend, their party has barely hit the six (6!) member mark when it ends, and its disappointing ending leaves no room for a sequel. Fans of *Suikoden* (the game) may enjoy watching for the discreet similarities between the two (note Takateru's scar... Seen that somewhere before?), but for a more fulfilling adventure, I suggest you seek out the original novel (translated here as "The Water Margin," I think... see Postmeister Vol. 4, Iss. 7 for more details) or the Konami RPG.



It's a wonder that I expect anything at all from Sega's perpetually low budget anime translations. I actually had a great deal of optimism towards this one, on the thought that "Hey, how could you mess up *Panzer Dragoon*?" The game on which it was based had a cool storyline, a beautifully original setting, exceptional monster design, great computer graphics, and a sensational soundtrack. Of those, *Panzer* the anime had... well... a pretty good soundtrack.





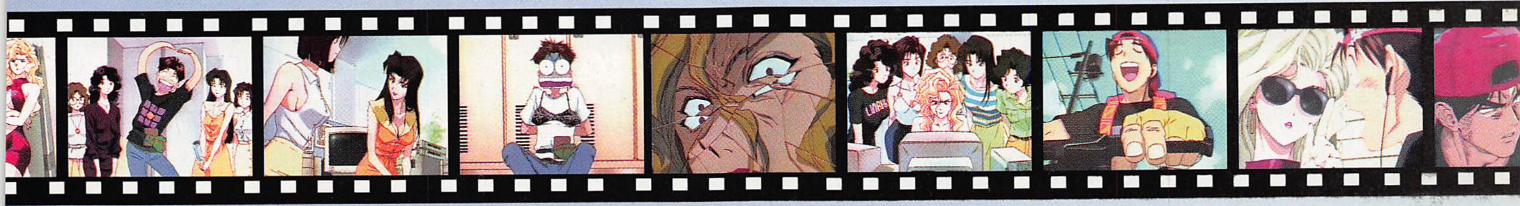
© SEGA ENTERPRISES,LTD 1995,1996

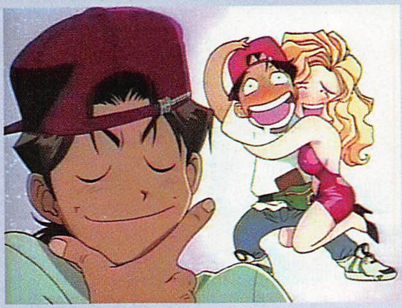
Panzer basically follows the plot of the game, with a beginning that's remarkably similar to (but far worse than) the now famous intro of that premier Saturn title. The only twist is that hero Kyle now has his blind girlfriend Alita riding along with him. The two witness the battle between the dragons, and the evil prototype dragon decides to make Alita his pilot, a storyline gimmick that's never really explained. Although Kyle doesn't trust the other dragon, the two team up to save Alita.

Their journey, which lasts about 10 of the tape's 25 whopping minutes, takes them through many a classic *Panzer 1* location, although the computer graphics in the tape are almost worse than they were in the game. CG enemies abound as well, but Kyle never really fights them, it just shows them flying ominously in the background. Ho-hum.

The animation quality is cheap, but not quite as cheap as the computer graphics, which look like they were rendered in about a week with one 486 computer. The only possible saving grace is the soundtrack: upbeat *Panzer 1* remixes that Sega (suddenly deciding to spare no expense) had done by Yoshitaka Azuma, *Panzer 1*'s famous composer. I'm willing to bet his salary was about double the combined total of their CG and animation budget.

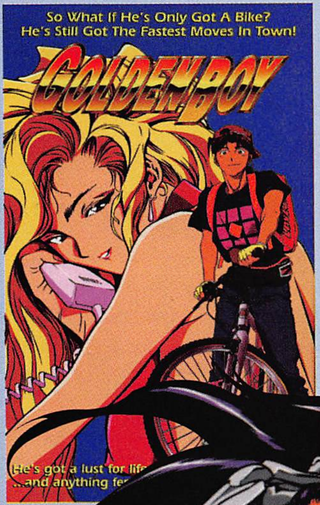


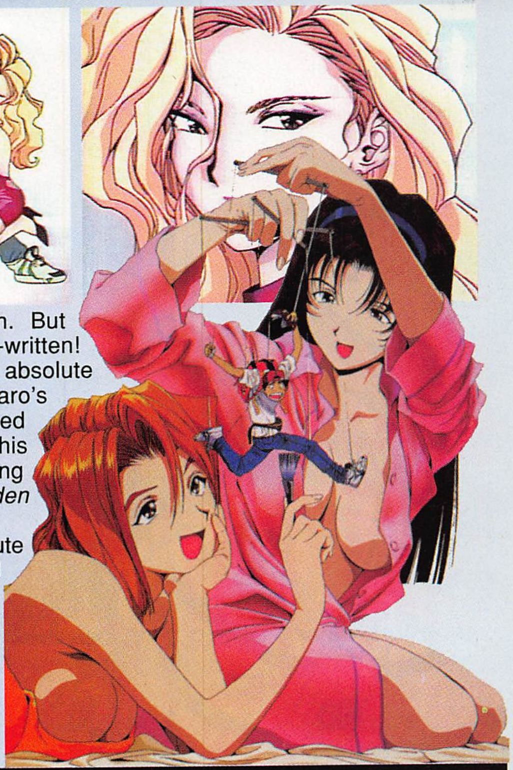




Golden Boy fits neatly into one of Japan's sure-fire formulas for a successful anime: a not-so-bright young man who's a complete and total horn-dog, and whose everyday life just happens to be filled with beautiful but unattainable, large-breasted women. And then, of course, "the wackiness ensues!" You've probably seen a million of them. I know I have.

But *Golden Boy* is somehow... different... Sure, the storyline is vintage horn-dog anime: A penniless, daydreamy student heads off to his first day of work at a computer company where all the programmers just happen to be (this is the computer industry, after all!) incredibly beautiful women. But the difference is that *Golden Boy* is actually incredibly well-written! The jokes range wildly from relatively high-brow humor to absolute puerility, but they all come off surprisingly well. Hero Kintaro's ever-changing character designs and overblown acting are used to great effect, and his gentle cluelessness mixed with his admirable lust for learning make him a legitimately interesting and likable main character. Even the animation quality in *Golden Boy* is astounding, especially for a comedy.





Although I was a bit disappointed to find only one 30 minute episode on each tape, *Golden Boy* is the first laugh-out-loud funny anime I've seen in a long time, and I heartily recommend it to mature audiences. Which gives me a nice segue to the mandatory parental advisory: Golden Boy *is* full of mature (in a PG-13 sort of way) humor and body-hugging spandex, but it's far tamer than the usual witless porn that floods the anime market. Still, definitely not for the young 'uns.

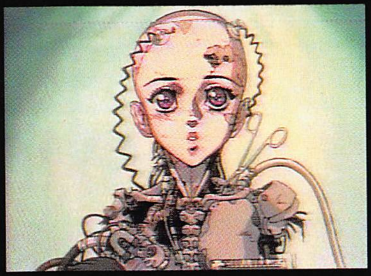


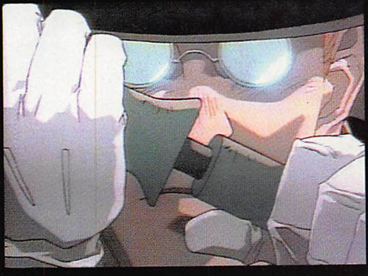
Battle Angel, a dramatically directed and darkly fascinating futurescape, is finally available in a well-done English dubbed version. If the previous lack of a dubbed version is what's kept you from viewing this acclaimed classic, this is an ideal chance to see what you've been missing.

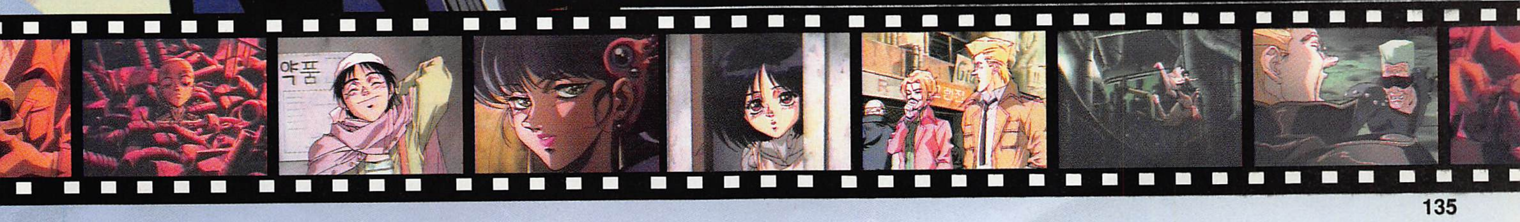
Both 35 minute episodes are collected on this one tape, which tells the story of Gally, an amnesiac cyborg whose strength and unexpected violent behavior are well concealed by her cute, girlish exterior. Although *Battle Angel*'s excellent storyline leaves little to be desired, its setting is even more fascinating. The residents of this dark world live in the shadow of Zalem, a floating city that is the unreachable paradise of the wealthy. Gally's home is the garbage pit beneath, where the poor and undesirable either resort to crime, or work for the mysterious, all-powerful "Factory."

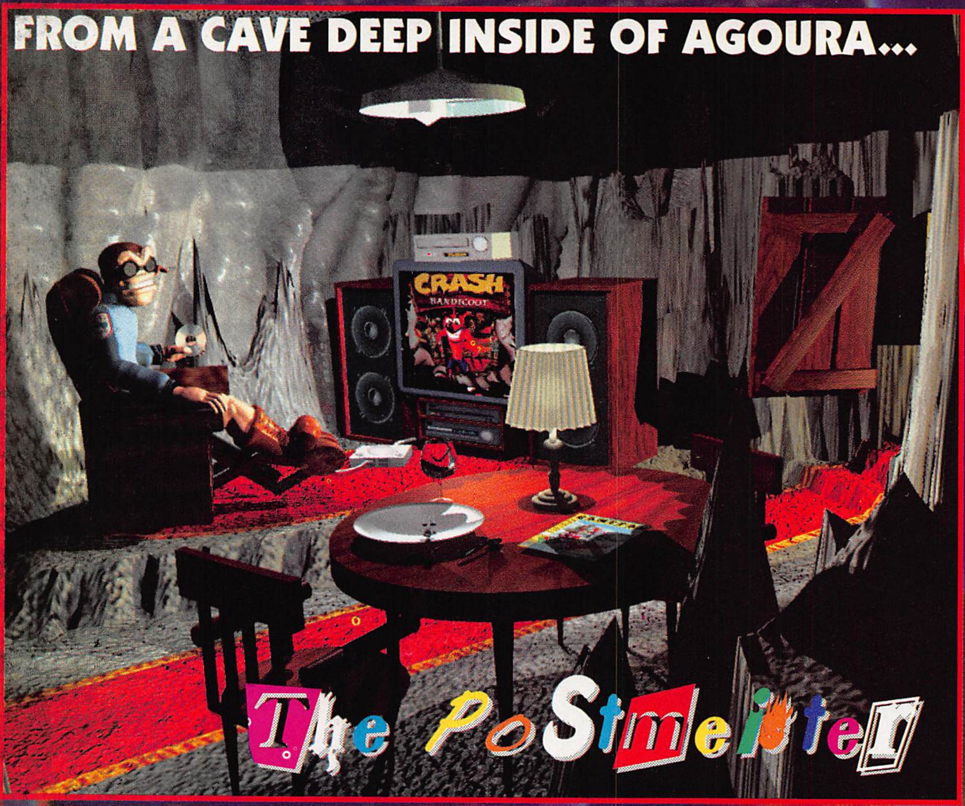


Battle Angel's excellent story and good animation are complimented by a typically good AD Vision dubbing and translation job, and this version also includes a bonus art portfolio at the end of the tape.









Dear Postmei-errr, Posty,

I have a PlayStation and it rules and all, but well, I can't get enough of RPGs, and the system doesn't have enough of them. I've called every number in GameFan (and I love the magazine) and other magazines and found nothing of when *Arc the Lad*, *Breath of Fire III*, *Genso Suikoden*, *Popolocrois*, *Castlevania* and *Final Fantasy VII* (The King of All RPGs) will be released in America. Sorry about your name but the German guy, that was in the last issue was right, your name does suck!!!

Now to the questions which I know you'll love to answer:

1.) When are the games listed above coming to America?
2.) Is *Beyond the Beyond* worth buying?
3.) What brand of clothes do you like?
4.) Is *Chrono Trigger 2* and *Secret of Mana 2+3* coming to the States?
5.) Are the *Sa•Ga* games good?
6.) Is MegaFan a good magazine?

That's about it... um... okay, bye.

P.S. I hope you run for president, because anyone's better than Dole+Clinton. Enclosed is a dollar, get you another bag of waffle chips. See ya!

Corey Gray
Longview, TX

1. Well, let's see. Arc the Lad *– Sony's purportedly slinging that crazy stuff together with Arc 2 for a US release, but who can say...* Breath III *– This one's for sure coming to the US, but, again, you're guess is as good as mine (hmm... probably not. My mother was clairvoyant, and clairvoyance is hereditary. I predict... my spirit guides tell me... mid '94!!).* Genso Suikoden *– Retitled* Suikoden*, Konami's beating that title down in the US in December! Mad props!* Popolocrois *– Haven't heard anything much on this one. I doubt SCEA will port over a title designed by a children's book illustrator, but who knows?* Castlevania *– Before I give you my answer, Corey, here's a tip: the* Castlevania *series, by and large, are action games... not RPGs. I can see the confusion, however. In answer to your question, it's due in Spring for the* PlayStation *in Japan as* Demon Castle Dracula X: Symphony of the Night Beneath the Moon. *As for the American release of* DCDX:SOTNBTM*, who knows...* Final Fantasy VII *- Again, the answer to this one is unclear. The* Tobal No.1 *demo disc released here actually called it FFVII, not FFIV, so it may be released in the Colonies under that title. I can see it now... legions of dejected game players wondering how they missed* Final Fantasies IV, V, *and VI...*

2. Why yes. Just ask layout king Bruce Stockert! It's the greatest RPG he's every played! (Don't tell him I told you, but it's the only RPG he's ever played... or at least, completed) In the Postmeister's opinion, however, you want to stay as far away from BeyoBeyo *as humanly possible. Things don't get much worse in RPG land.*

3.) Clothes??! All my clothes are sanctioned by the US government, buddy! Postal regulations!! It doesn't matter much anyway, I haven't changed them for a few years now...

4.) Seeing as how CT2 *hasn't yet been announced, that one seems a little unlikely. Neither has* SoM3*... ditto. As for* Seiken Densetsu 3, *AKA* Secret of Mana 2, *the answer is again, forget it.*

5.) Takuhi seems to think so. But hey, that Frontier*'s looking mighty juicy!*

6.) MegaFan? Hey, I just answer letters, chum.

Not that I'm against my readers sending dollars, but those losers over at Goodies Galore stopped putting my beloved waffle chips in our vending machine. Needless to say, not enough members of that merry troop survived to continue servicing us.

Just so you don't suffer, like, an aneurysm from seeing the monthly routine shattered, I'm warning you now: The next few letters are on the same subject, so I'll give them one collective answer. We can both get through this!

OH MY GOD! Say it ain't so! Say that Square will produce games for the N64! Say that Square didn't abandon Nintendo! I can't stand it! The pain... the torture... why... why!?!?

Alex Musa
Carmichael, CA

Dear Postmeister:

I'm writing today with a very clear purpose. I entreat Square to reconsider its position regarding development on the Nintendo 64. We all know Nintendo was foolish to go with fast (but very inadequate) cartridges and is doubly foolish to believe that 64 megabyte magneto-optical disks will make up for such a mistake, but the N64 is, for the moment, the most powerful system on the market. Surely Square and Nintendo (which in my opinion are the two greatest game companies in the world) can find a way to fit the completeness and near-perfection of a Square game on a cartridge and at the same time take full advantage of the N64's capabilities. I speak for the many Nintendo fans who, while frustrated over Nintendo's potentially disastrous course of action, are dedicated to the company and see potential in the N64's success (which means we [mistakenly?] bought the system). There's no company on Earth that can make an RPG like Square, and we Nintendo gamers will have to endure much suffering if we can't play quality RPGs.

Please... don't leave us hanging.

Ducson Nguyen
Absecon, NJ

Postmeister,

Waiting, waiting, waiting. Still waiting for evidence of a pure RPG for N64. *Mario RPG 2* will be an incredibly great game, but I need a few sword-swingin', spell-throwin' (and challenging) RPGs. When I heard the rumor (let's hope it's just a rumor) that Squaresoft would not make any games for the N64, I was devastated. So far, this rumor has lived up to its rotten message.

Billy Jones
Denton, KY

Dear Postmeister:

I am still getting over the traumatic shock over Square leaving Nintendo for Sony. It's like Square cheated on Nintendo with Sony behind its back! It's so... so... tragic. Well, if Square wants to be stupid, be my guest. I for one don't care anymore.
[numerous questions cut, key answers below]
That's right! I'm poppin' off!

Jason Cho
Anaheim, CA

Poppin' off? *I don't think I know you that well yet, Jason. Anyway, here's the Postmeister's view on this situation: Square makes great games, right? Right. Who cares what platform they appear on, as long as it can do their games justice? Nobody can honestly say that* Final Fantasy VII *in its current form could be produced on the N64, cartridge or 64DD. There's simply not enough memory. Think about it... 1.9 gigs of prerendered backgrounds and FMV crammed into, at most, 64 megabytes? No. If* FFVII *were to appear on the N64, it would have to be ALL polygons, and I can honestly say I don't want* Final Fantasy *to have the chronic lack of detail sported in most N64 games. Besides, should any company be restricted to one platform? Surely not. CD is cool. PlayStation is cool. Square is cool. Final Fantasy VII is hot. Now, to answer some questions that appeared in these letters: To Alex – Konami's currently making a sequel,* Metal Gear Solid, *on... yes, you saw it coming... your nemesis... the PlayStation! There's to be no* Chrono Trigger *fighting game or anime, but check out* Dragon Ball Z, *currently airing in the US for some of that burning Akira Toriyama (the* Chrono *character designer) action. To Billy – Want an N64 RPG? Good news! Imagineer is bringing you the boxy-looking* Magic Century Eltale *in '97... in Japan, at least! To Jason –* Zelda 64, *while surely da bomb, will probably come out around June '97. Namco has a sports game and an RPG in the works for the N64.* FFVII *not all that? For shame! I doubt the Saturn could handle it... No news on a* Dragon Quest 64, *but the big rumor speaks of a CD-based* Dragon Quest "32..." *Who's the greatest video game babe of all time? Mary Ivonskaya from* Tobal No. 1, *of course!*

Dear Postest with the Mostest *(OK, it's time for this salutation to END. I've received too many letters that begin like this! Are we clear, post-minions?)*

I was trying to resist the usual itemized Q's, but it seems like tradition.

1.) Will *Policenauts* be coming to America on the PS?
2.) How about *Popolocrois*? That one looked tasty.
3.) Is *Dark Savior* strictly for the Saturn?
4.) Where is *Castlevania* for 32-bit?
5.) On that subject, what happened to the Graveyard?

Thank you, "Purveyor of Postography," for your ultimate wisdom. And thanks to everyone at GameFan for bringing us the ultimate game mag... period!

D.R. Hallahan
Des Plaines, IL

"Purveyor of Postography..." I like that one. Before I answer D.R.'s questions, I'd like to encourage everyone to mention pastries in letters to me. D.R. happened to bring up sugar donuts in a part of his letter that was edited, and it brought back nostalgic memories of the time I got all these beignets and... and... er, never mind. Let's just say that I'm not allowed confectionary at GameFan any longer. So, on to the Q's:
1.) Probably not. It was only announced for the Saturn, and Sony has a massive problem with cigarettes, which Johnathan Ingram, the main character, perpetually has hanging from his mouth.
2.) See above.
3.) Indeed. Climax isn't a third-party for anyone except Sega.
4.) Above!
5.) Ah, the Graveyard. GameFan has been insanely busy lately, what with the launch of a new magazine and a year-end special taking up much of our time. Now that things have quieted down, however, you can bet rice to wheat that the 'Yard's a-comin' back!

And now a word to the ever-lovely Jen Seng: You sent a lovely letter this month, but due to space constraints I'm not able to print it! Forgive me!! Forgive all of us! Anyway, here's a few answers to some of your questions. First of all, Nick Rox is beyond pleased (and in fact a bit misty-eyed) that you enjoyed his book, and he sends you a very special hello. As for Wolfinger's Wall, it's definitely coming back at some stage... we usually don't receive enough art for it, so we have to wait a while. Look for it soon! You're designing characters?!? We'd love to see some Jen Seng originals! Send 'em in! Now, the bad news: You want Guile back? Well, uh, you have him... in glorious... er, nice, er... um... in 3-D! Yeah! He's in Street Fighter EX, *which you can see in this issue. Thanks for writing, as usual! Oh, and your art's to be sent back immediately. Sorry for the delay! Oh, here's your hello: Hi, Jon!*



We'll, it's about that time again... namaste. Join me next month in Posty's Yoga Postures Vol. 11... no, wait...

Yet more Jen... NOW new and improved with line art!



Oh no!! Poor Sasquatch!

Write to me or I'll run for President!

The Postmeister
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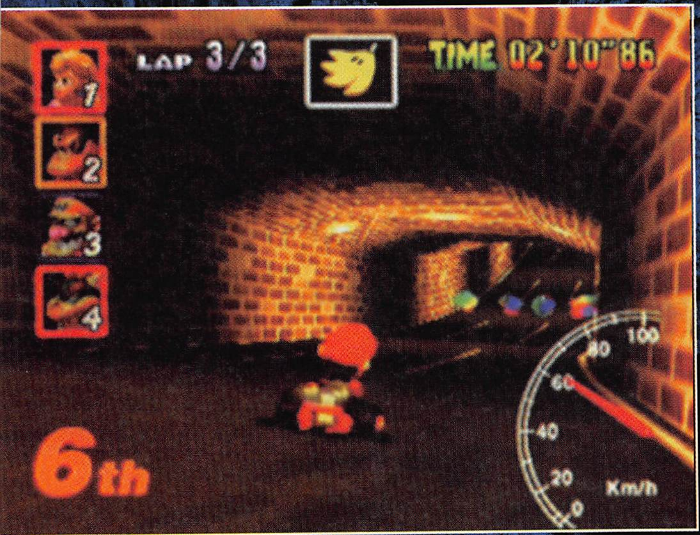
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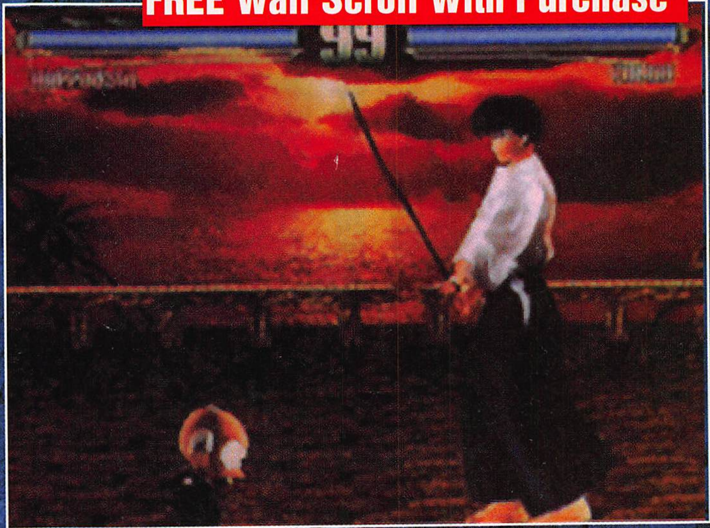
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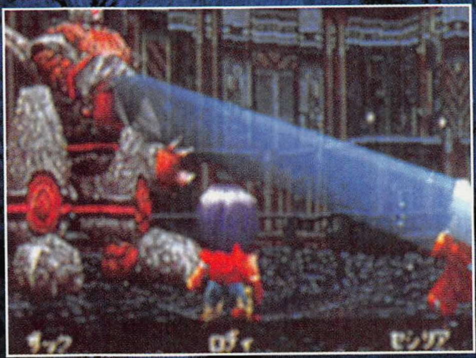
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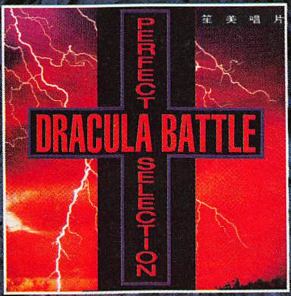
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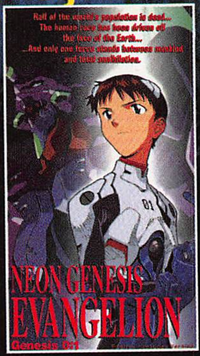
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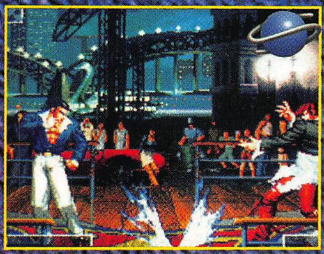
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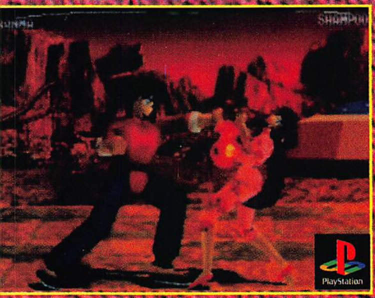
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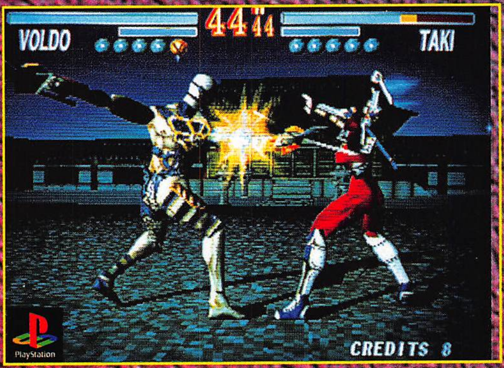
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